

Life of the Spirit

A BLACKFRIARS REVIEW



Volume V

APRIL 1951

Number 58

THE PRIEST OF THE PEOPLE

A Special Double Number on the Spirituality of the Priesthood with contributors including: Dom Bede Griffiths, Mgr H. F. Davis, Canon G. D. Smith, Canon Bernard Wall, Bede Jarrett, Donald Nicholl, Conrad Pepler

REVIEWS

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Life of the Spirit

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THE PRIEST OF THE PEOPLE

By THE EDITOR

EVERY HIGH PRIEST TAKEN FROM AMONG MEN IS ORDAINED FOR MEN IN THE THINGS THAT APPERTAIN TO GOD, THAT HE MAY OFFER UP GIFTS AND SACRIFICES FOR SINS.—*Hebrews*, 5, 1.

ST PAUL'S celebrated definition of the priest provides the best introduction to the present number of *LIFE OF THE SPIRIT*. For St Paul keeps the balance between the choice which separates the priest from the people, and the purpose of the choice which brings the priest into the midst of the people as their minister and representative. At the ordination, the bishop begins by insisting that the people should have a say in the election of their clergy; and Pope Pius XI followed that inspiration when he addressed an Encyclical letter to the whole Church on the subject of the Catholic priesthood (*Ad Catholici sacerdotii*, December 1935). More recently, the courageous Cardinal Suhard of Paris addressed himself to his own archdiocese in his already famous pastoral—*Le Prêtre dans la Cité*—which was intended to stir up among priests and people a devotion and appreciation of this aspect of the Church.

And now the present Holy Father, Pius XII, has sent a long exhortation to all the clergy throughout the world on 'promoting the holiness of priestly life'—*Menti Nostrae* (September 1950). This latest apostolic exhortation is particularly concerned with the modern training of the future priesthood, and that particular aspect of the Christian priesthood, no less than any other, is of importance to the people of the Church as well as to their ministers. For not only is the priest responsible for the means of spirituality which flow into the whole Church, but also every member of the Church is in some way responsible for the holiness of the priests who thus minister to them. The Holy Father begins by quoting St Peter: 'Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking care of it not by constraint but willingly according to God.... being made a pattern of the flock from the heart' (1 Peter 5). The pastors are thus to be among their flock and the pattern or 'form' of those whom they feed.

The enemies of the Church often launch their most violent attacks on the priesthood. The present times reveal this with increasing cruelty, as Cardinals and bishops are tortured, and clergy of all ranks, both secular and regular, are done to death for being ministers to the strength of the Church. It is mainly for this reason that the Popes have insisted so much on the need for worthy priests, desiring them to be well trained for their gigantic tasks, trained indeed for martyrdom.

But a wrong attitude towards the priesthood from within the Church is of course more serious, and it is against this that the recent encyclicals and pastorals have set the true doctrine of the holiness of the priesthood. The attack, moreover, comes not only from the ranks of the faithful who are labelled 'anti-clerical'. A more insidious, because unconscious, undermining of the true position of the priest comes from those of the laity who set the priest on such an enormously high pedestal that inevitably he topples over when there is the slightest tremor in the earth beneath him. 'Clericalism' is responsible for as great a separation between priest and people as 'anti-clericalism', since it tends to make the priest more untouchable and unknowable. And the priest himself often forgets under pressure of adulation and remoteness that his position lies among the flock of whom he must be the pattern.

A writer commenting on Pius XII's exhortation has shown that the special contribution of '*Menti Nostrae*' lies in the means suggested by His Holiness for overcoming the danger of the seclusion of the clergy from the people.¹ The future priests during their training must be taught to think for themselves in order to meet the ideas that live in the minds of the men of the day around them. They must be prepared to meet men of every condition of life, and to acquire an adequate knowledge of world affairs. For they are to be men from among men, helping men to reach God. The methods for achieving this communion with 'the flock' are quite revolutionary and reflect the same spirit that lay behind the Pope's encyclical on the Bible. The priest is fearlessly to learn what is being taught to the men and women of his day.

We are not directly concerned here with the new means recommended for the apostolate, though it is important to recognise the development in this sphere. But the Pope does insist

¹ *Menti Nostrae*: Some Observations by Canon J. Cartmell. (*Clergy Review*: February 1951. pp. 88sq.)

that, wherever anyone is suffering difficulties, there must the priest be found, succouring and helping the distressed and disturbed. He is to be found among the poor and the oppressed as well as among those who, though better off materially, may be in greater need through evil ideas and doctrines.

The priest, then, must be in one sense identified with the people, and the people must find in him their most cherished hopes, the spokesman of their own ideas. The priest who offers his Sunday Mass throughout the year *Pro populo* stands as their representative, which should not mean a mechanical relationship such as might exist between a foreman in a factory and the working men. The one who represents the rest must be linked to them with bonds of mind by knowing their ideas, and with bonds of will in sympathy and love. This cannot be if the people do not co-operate with their priest, leaving him to perform his duties with no idea of his problems or his responsibilities. There must be an increasingly mutual action between the two, so that the Church may be drawn into close unity and so grow in her apostolic strength in the conversion of those who remain as yet debarred from contact with the priest of God.

The present issue of LIFE OF THE SPIRIT, therefore, is addressed as much to the laity as to the clergy. It is hoped that it may contribute, however slightly, towards drawing priest and people even more closely together so that the Church may continue to increase in that unity of all her members in the one life. Indeed, the fundamental spirituality for priest and people alike is always the same, the identification with the living Christ Jesus. The training in the way of living this life will evidently differ considerably for the clergy and laity, but the ideal of contemplation, of obedience, of union with our Lord in the Eucharist, all these aspects of the one life, must be viewed from the same basic principles.

It would be impossible to cover all the ground cultivated in the Pope's exhortation in this respect, but this special number may be regarded as issued in honour of *Menti Nostrae*, designed to show its relevance to priest and people alike. Thus the Holy Father speaks of the contemplation of the priest whose daily recitation of the Office leads him to pray always, both as the 'voice of Christ' and as the 'voice of the Church'. He speaks necessarily of the priest's daily meditation as a preparation for celebrating the

Eucharist sacrifice, 'which he not only celebrates, but which he must also in an intimate way live, for thus he can absorb the heavenly power by which it comes about that he is transformed, and shares in the precious life of the divine Redeemer himself'. This indeed is the goal of all the people for whom the priest ministers. Obedience of the true sort that leads to freedom in Christ is, of course, the basis of the training of the future priests who are taught, in the words of St Ignatius of Antioch, to obey the bishops as Jesus obeyed his Father. Indeed, this principle, more than any other once it is grasped also by the laity, should help to avoid the double danger of 'clericalism' and 'anti-clericalism', both of which tend to a dangerous divorce between priest and people.

The Holy Father's peroration, commending to his priests devotion to the blessed Mother of God, reminds the whole Church of her special protection, in her powerful maternal chastity, of the flock for whom the hundreds of thousands of priests throughout the world now labour.² 'And as for Ourselves, We desire fervently to commend all the priests throughout the entire world to the blessed Mother of God, that by her intercession God may abundantly pour forth his Spirit, who carries his sacred ministers towards holiness and restores the human race with a new moral life.'

² Compare: *La Très Sainte Vierge et le Sacerdoce*. By Paul Philippe, O.P. (Cerf.; and Blackfriars Publications.)

THE PRIESTHOOD AND CONTEMPLATION

By DOM BEDE GRIFFITHS

THE Mass, said St Vincent Ferrer, is the highest act of contemplation. This relation between the Mass and contemplation, and hence between the priesthood and the contemplative life, is something which has received very little attention; and yet it is something of supreme importance in the spiritual life of a priest, and in the whole conception of contemplation and the contemplative life. For too long, contemplation has been regarded as a matter of individual piety, the final phase in a system of meditation and mental prayer, to which few are expected to attain and which has no apparent relation to the sacramental and liturgical life of the Church. Garrigou-Lagrange¹ has done much to correct this tendency, by showing that contemplation is not to be regarded as an extraordinary grace to which only a few can aspire, but as part of the normal perfection of a Christian life; the development of the grace which we all receive at baptism under the influence of the gifts of the Holy Ghost. Dom Anselm Stolz² has taken this doctrine a step further by showing that, in the tradition of the Church, contemplation is always centred upon Christ and is intimately related in all its stages to the sacramental life of the Church. This can be seen most clearly in the teaching of the Greek Fathers, especially St Gregory of Nyssa, whose mystical theology has been made the subject of a profound study by Père Daniélou³. According to this theory, the three stages of the spiritual life, the purgative, the illuminative and the unitive way, correspond with the three sacraments of baptism, confirmation and Eucharist. Baptism is the sacrament which separates us from sin and gives us the light of faith, and corresponds therefore with the purgative way. Confirmation initiates us into the way of the spirit and raises the mind above the world of the senses, and corresponds with the illuminative way. Finally the Eucharist is the sacrament of union, the consummation of the spiritual life, which brings us into direct contact with God.

¹ Christian Perfection and Contemplation. ² Doctrine of Spiritual Perfection.

³ *Platonisme et Théologie Mystique*.

In this way, contemplation is seen as a normal effect of the sacramental life, initiated in baptism, developed in confirmation and consummated in the Mass. The implications of this doctrine are obvious. It places contemplation at the very centre of the Christian life, relates it to the Mass and the other sacraments and sets it in the framework of the common life of the Church.

But it is not only the Mass and the sacraments that are thus related to the contemplative life. In the teaching of the Fathers, the Scriptures were also regarded as having a kind of sacramental character, and were seen as the God-given means for leading the soul to the goal of contemplation. Here again we have grown accustomed to systems of meditation, which, though no doubt ultimately based on the Scriptures, have grown very far from their mode of expression and of thought. But, in the early Church, the Scriptures, particularly the Psalms, were the one great source of meditation, and in the Rule of St Benedict, which codifies, as it were, the prayer life of the early Church, the *lectio divina*, or meditative reading of the Scriptures and the Fathers, is the only form of meditation that is found. Now it is precisely this treasury of readings from the Scriptures and the Fathers, in which the whole tradition of the Church is enshrined, that is placed in the hands of every priest in the Breviary. In the Mass and the Breviary therefore every priest has at his disposal a perfect method of prayer and contemplation. This is, moreover, not merely an individual method of prayer, but the prayer of the Church. In it and through it the priest is united with the whole Church, with all his fellow-members in the Body of Christ. He prays as a member of a body, as a part of a whole: and as his prayer goes to strengthen the life of the whole Church, so it also receives help and strength from the prayer of others. If the office is recited in common, this mutual strengthening of prayer can be more definitely felt, but even when he prays alone, he is no less really united to the whole Body and his prayer is no less truly a common prayer. It is a mistake to think of contemplation as being necessarily something solitary, which withdraws us from our fellow-men. There is certainly a kind of withdrawal in contemplation, but it is a withdrawal of the mind and the will into God, which actually unites us more intimately with others. It is in their superficial characteristics that men are most divided: the more we penetrate beneath the surface into the heart, the more we realise the ground

of our union with one another in Christ and the Church. It is therefore in the common prayer of the Church, which is the prayer of Christ himself, that we must seek the perfection of Christian life and the ideal of Christian contemplation.

But it will be said that there is a serious obstacle to this theory, that contemplative prayer is always held to be beyond the sphere of words and images, whereas the liturgy of the church is entirely based upon them. This is a serious objection, and needs serious consideration. It is quite true that contemplation is generally held to begin when the mind passes beyond words and images and all clear concepts, and comes under the direct influence of divine grace. But this does not mean that the mind must necessarily abandon the use of words and images altogether. When the mind passes into a state of contemplation, it will not use words and images as the proper means of its prayer—this will be supplied by the action of grace—but it may nevertheless use them as ‘supports’ to its prayer. The purpose of all prayer is to raise the mind and will to God. All words and actions, all images and concepts, whether of the Mass or the divine office, are so many means—sacramental signs—by which the mind and will are raised to God. We must never stop short at the sign, but use it as a means to ascend to the thing signified—the infinite reality of God. It is in this way that we have to learn to use both the Mass and the divine office.

For this purpose the careful recitation of the words of the divine office, whether said in public or in private, and the deliberate performance of the gestures of the Mass, the sign of the cross, bowing and genuflecting and moving across the altar, are all of primary importance. Each word and gesture must be given a sacramental character: it must become a means of recollection. The regular rhythm of the recitation of words or the performance of a rite is a universally valid means of recollection. If it is done with haste or with a distracted mind, its whole value is lost: but if it is done, not necessarily slowly, but with recollection and attention, it can become one of the most perfect means of preparing the soul for contemplation. The same may be said, incidentally, of the Rosary, which can also be used as a method of contemplative prayer. Any ordered, rhythmical action by which the body is set at rest, and the mind made attentive, has this sacramental character. If to this the chant and ceremonies of High

Mass are added and are rendered with proper care, a vast, rhythmical structure of prayer is built up, which forms the perfect theatre for contemplative prayer. As with words and actions, so with thoughts and images: these also must be used as a means to raise the mind and will to God. The aim here must be not to indulge in discursive thought and fancy, but to concentrate the mind in a more and more simple act of attention to God. This act of 'attention' has been well described, in general terms, by Simone Weil.⁴ 'Attention consists in suspending the activity of the mind, in leaving it open, empty, and able to be penetrated by the object of thought. . . . above all the mind must be empty, attentive, seeking nothing but being ready to receive, in its naked truth, the object which is going to penetrate it.' When it is a question of contemplative prayer, the mind must be simply seeking God, not any particular image or concept of God, but God himself in his 'naked truth'. So when we approach the Mass or the divine office, we should not try to force our attention, but to leave the mind open, so that the thoughts and images penetrate the mind, while it remains continually quiet and attentive to God. In this way, the supernatural meaning of the psalms and the scriptures, that 'mystical sense' which was the delight of the Fathers of the Church, will gradually be unfolded, and we shall enter into the inner meaning of the mystery of Christ and the Church.

Thus the recitation of the divine office may become a regular method of contemplation and establish the soul in the 'illuminative way'. There may even be moments when, as we read in Cassian's account of the prayer of the Egyptian monks, in the course of the psalmody the mind may be carried beyond itself and pass into ecstasy—that is into that 'pure prayer' where all thoughts and images are totally transcended, and the soul is absorbed in God. But normally the succession of words and images passing through the mind will create a kind of rhythmical pattern, by which the mind will become gradually unified and concentrated on God, so that while the recitation continues as it were on one level, on another level the mind is wholly attentive to God and recollected in his presence. Thus the recitation of the divine office may lead by gradual stages to a state of contemplation, which, though it is, of course, rare in ordinary experience

⁴ *Attente de Dieu*.

and is a wholly gratuitous grace, is yet in no way outside the ordinary way of liturgical prayer.

But if the divine office can lead us to the threshold of the unitive way, it is in the Mass, as has been said, that we must seek for the 'highest act' of contemplation and the most perfect means of union with God. Now, the basis of this union is to be found, as we have seen, in baptism. In baptism, a seed of divine life is implanted in the soul, which is capable of developing, through the influence of the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the grace of confirmation, until it leads us to the beatific vision of God. But this divine life encounters an obstacle in our nature in the form of sin, and before it can wholly penetrate our nature, a profound transformation has to take place of our whole being; and this transformation of our being involves a kind of death to the soul. 'You who are baptised', says St Paul, 'were baptised into the death of Christ.' We have to die that we may live; to die to sin, to the world, to ourselves in order that we may live in Christ to God. Baptism is the beginning of this process; it is a real, though mystical, death to sin which unites us really, though mystically, to Christ in his death and resurrection. It is the root of a union which has only to grow in order to attain to the full flower of Christian perfection. But this process of growth involves a continual death and resurrection. The more we advance, the deeper the death we have to die in order that we may be totally transformed and conformed to Christ: and the sacrament which enables us thus to die daily, to be transformed daily into the image of Christ, is the Eucharist. This is the true meaning and purpose of the sacrifice of the Mass: that we should be enabled to participate in the sacrifice of Christ, to share his death in order that we may share his resurrection and so offer supreme glory to the Father.

The sacrifice of the Mass is then, for the priest, the supreme means of his sanctification, because in it and through it he becomes more and more closely identified with Christ. Just as in the divine office we make use of words and gestures, of images and thoughts, in order to raise the mind and will to union with God, so also it is with the Mass. Every word and gesture, every image and thought suggested by the sacred words has its own value and forms part of a rhythmical pattern, which creates the perfect setting for the union of the soul with God. But at the centre of the Mass there is something more: there is the divine action, the redemptive act of

Christ, made present to us sacramentally through the action of the Mass. Our action of self-oblation is met by the corresponding act of self-oblation on the part of God, and our sacrifice is identified with his, just as the bread and wine we offer are transformed into the substance of his flesh and blood. Here there takes place that marriage of the soul with God, of Christ with the Church, which is the consummation of Christian prayer. For each of us, of course, the degree in which this union is realised depends upon his disposition and the special grace he may receive; but the way is there open for all, and it is the way to the closest conceivable union with God. At the heart of the Mass, in the silence of the consecration and communion, we enter into the holy of holies, where no created thing stands between the soul and God.

The implications of this conception of the Mass as the 'highest act of contemplation' and the perfect means of union with God are very great. In the first place, it sets contemplation, as we have said, at the very centre of the Christian life. It would scarcely be an exaggeration to say that on this ground the Christian life is essentially a contemplative life, in that it is wholly ordered towards contemplation and union with God in the central act of its religion. But, in the second place, it reveals the profoundly social character of Christian contemplation. The priest does not offer Mass alone: he offers it in the name and on behalf of the whole Church. Whether Mass is offered in public or in private, with one server or with a multitude of people present, it is always the offering of the whole Church, of the mystical body united with its head. But more than this, we know that the '*res*', the reality signified and effected by the sacrament of the Eucharist, is precisely the 'unity of the mystical body of Christ': so that in this sacrifice the priest is united with the whole people, who offer the sacrifice with him, in the most profound sacramental union. It is by this means above all that the unity of the Church, and eventually the unity of all mankind in Christ, which is the object of the Mass and the redemption, are achieved. Thus Christian contemplation, so far from isolating the contemplative, brings him into the most intimate contact with others' souls; he becomes identified with Christ in his redeeming work for all mankind. There is no human need which is not represented in the offering of the bread and wine on the altar, no human soul whose self-oblation is not included in the sacrifice. The more the priest has identified himself with

Christ in his sacrifice, the wider will be his sympathy, the more he will penetrate into the deepest needs of mankind. It is in this respect that a priest who is vowed to the contemplative life exercises his apostolate. However limited his contact with others may be extensively, intensively he can identify himself with the needs of all. Sharing in the sacrifice of Christ, he shares also in the prayer of Christ, which is the prayer of the Church, and in the whole redeeming work of Christ, which is the work of the Church. It is his privilege, precisely in proportion as he renounces his own personal activity, to act in the person of Christ and in the name of the Church.

But for the priest who is engaged in the active apostolate of the Church, the consequences are no less important. It means that he has in the Mass the one supreme source of all apostolic work. His activity will be of value just in proportion as it is fed from this source. It is in the contemplation of the mystery of Christ and the Church, in union with Christ in the sacrifice of the Mass, that he will gain the light and strength he needs, if his work is to be of a supernatural character. '*Contemplata aliis tradere*' must be the motto of every genuine apostle, and this contemplation, as we have seen, is the fruit of the right use of the Mass and the breviary. The means are there for all to use; they are the most simple and fundamental of all. A priest fulfils his function as a priest just in so far as he identifies himself with Christ in the sacrifice of the Mass and in the prayer of the liturgy. It is through this that the redemptive work of Christ is perpetuated in the world. Through this the only adequate praise and worship and adoration are offered to God; through this the only adequate offering is made for sin, and mankind is restored to its lost unity, and souls are saved; through this, finally, the Church is built up and perfected as the Bride of Christ. It is the ladder set between heaven and earth, on which the angels ascend and descend, bearing the offerings of man to God and bestowing the graces of God on mankind; and it is the priest who is the mediator of this intercourse. It may be asked, in conclusion, what is the relation of private prayer to this public prayer of the Mass and the liturgy? It is sometimes suggested that vocal prayer, the prayer of the Mass and the breviary, is a kind of elementary basis from which each individual has to advance along his own path of private, mental prayer towards union with God. But this seems to us to

be the opposite of the truth. In reality it is our private prayer which is, as it were, an elementary exercise preparing us for the great work of the Mass and liturgy. Our private prayer ought, as far as possible, to be wholly subordinate to the public prayer of the Church. It may take the form of a preparation for Mass, or a thanksgiving after Mass, or of half an hour or an hour at some other time of the day. But always it should be subordinate, and as far as possible related to the prayer of the liturgy. We should try to school our minds in the language and habit of thought of the psalms and the scriptures generally, so that when we come to take part in the Mass or the divine office we find that it is the expression of our own most personal prayer. Our individual prayer will become more and not less personal as it begins to find its expression in the liturgy and the Mass, because ultimately our own personality can be fulfilled only when it has been conformed to the person of Christ. Thus, ideally, the prayer of the liturgy should be the fulfilment of personal prayer.

This does not mean, however, that our prayer must always be tied to the words and forms of the liturgy. We must insist that the whole of the divine office, like the action of the Mass, opens out upon the entire mystery of Christ and the Church. The words and actions, the images and ideas of the liturgy are nothing but means by which we are enabled to reach out beyond finite concepts into the inner mystery of the divine life. We need these means, these concepts and actions, to enable us to mount towards God, but God can use them in many secret ways to achieve his work of pure contemplation. This contemplation will be, of course, as profoundly personal prayer, but it will be a prayer which extends far beyond the limits of our own personality into the mystery of the personal life of God. Such contemplation will overflow into our daily life and awaken prayer, it may be, at all times of the day, but it will be a prayer that stems from the source of the Mass and the liturgy, and is constantly returning to its source. In this way we should eventually by grace be able to make our whole life an offering of Mass, a continuous self-oblation in union with Christ, and a continuous offering of praise to God and of prayer for our fellow men. Then we should really be living the life of Christ in his Church, and this is the ideal of Christian contemplation.

THE UNCHANGING PRIESTHOOD

By H. FRANCIS DAVIS

IN 1950, two important works on the priesthood were published. The first was a posthumous work¹ of the late Rector of Wonersh, Mgr Hallett, a small work but invaluable, the result of many years of experience in the training of the clergy. The second was a new translation by Fr Henry Davis, S.J., of St Gregory the Great's *Pastoral Care*.² The latter has had a considerable influence on priestly spirituality in England ever since it was translated in the ninth century by Alfred the Great. It had been familiar in England in recent times, especially through Bishop Hedley's edition, *Lex Levitarum*.

The appearance about the same time of a sixth and a twentieth century work on the priesthood invites us to take a general view of Catholic works on the priesthood through the centuries, placing these two works in their setting. There is no better way to see their importance, and at the same time to appreciate the timeless urgency of an understanding of the true and deep understanding of our Christian priesthood. Mgr Hallett takes as his title and basic principle that the priest is Christ's friend. In so doing he takes us back to the second book of St John Chrysostom, *On the Priesthood*, where he tells us that priestly zeal must spring only from love of Christ. We are also reminded of St Gregory's *Pastoral Care*, where he deplores those who from excessive humility decline the office of preaching, while Christ the 'Bridegroom... desires to hear her [the Church's] voice, for he yearns for her preaching through the souls of his elect'.³

We propose then to review the volumes before us in their place in priesthood spirituality, considering with them the other two masters of the ancient Church and our own Cardinal Manning.

¹ *The Priest-Friend of Christ*, by Mgr. Philip E. Hallett. (D. J. Murphy, London 1950; 6s.)

² Ancient Christian Writers. *St Gregory the Great, Pastoral Care*, translated by Henry Davis, S.J. (Newman Press, Maryland, 1950; \$3). The translation is as well done as we should expect from Fr Davis and is combined with useful, compact introduction, notes and index.

³ St Gregory the Great, op. cit., ed. cit., p. 179.

I

St Gregory the Great had a predominant influence on the Western world both because his work was written in Latin and sent to various parts of the Christian world, and because his homilies which popularised some of the principal doctrines of his *Pastoral Care* have since early times been read almost daily in the Latin breviary. But his work would hardly have been written, at least in its present form, were it not for the much earlier work of his Cappadocian namesake, Gregory the Theologian, as the Easterns call him.

The third of the ancient classics, a greater work of art than that of either of the Gregories, was St John Chrysostom's *On The Priesthood*, written in the fourth century about ten years after that of St Gregory the Theologian, otherwise called Nazianzen. The occasion of all three works was the same. St Gregory Nazianzen wrote to apologise for his attempt to evade the priestly vocation by fleeing into the desert immediately after the ordination he had been so reluctant to accept. St John Chrysostom wrote to justify himself to his friend for his successful evasion of the priesthood and episcopate when plots were first made to thrust it upon him. St Gregory wrote to explain why he had tried to escape the office of Bishop of Rome, and to urge others to think carefully before undertaking any priestly office.

All three speak as though men of their time were unduly ambitious of rushing into the priesthood, as though it were like any worldly occupation, open to all who had influence and ability to procure it. All three regard it as their duty, not only to declare their own unworthiness for the office, but by their example and teaching to dissuade others from accepting it without firm conviction of their aptness and purity of motive.

Today we are perhaps surprised at such dissuasion, for we live in a world when many as well as good priests are sorely needed. Where the early fathers deplored the numbers of unworthy candidates, we deplore the dearth of worthy ones. However, we must not think that the Gregories and the Chrysostoms were unaware of the importance of vocations. 'For', writes Gregory Nazianzen, 'if all men were to shirk this office, whether it must be called a ministry or a leadership, the fair fulness of the Church would be halting in the highest degree, and in fact cease to be fair. And further, where, and by whom would God be worshipped

among us in those mysteries and elevating rites which are our greatest and most precious privilege, if there were neither king, nor governor, nor priesthood, nor sacrifice, nor all those highest offices to the loss of which, for their great sins, men were of old condemned in consequence of their disobedience?' 4

But there is for us also a lesson in their diffidence. Theoretically at least we have learnt it. Today the faithful everywhere look up to the priestly office. Thanks be to God, few people consciously approach it without a real desire to dedicate their lives to God's service. But in practice the lesson has not always sunk deeply into our minds. We too easily approach the priesthood as something open to any of us, provided he is what people would call a good Catholic. We admit that a priest must be trained, and that he must know his theology, though in this latter respect we do not always set our standards as high as we might. Certainly it is as unusual to find ecclesiastical students with scruples as to whether they are learned enough for their work, as it is to find them worried as to whether they have a sufficiently sympathetic understanding of souls to be able to win their confidence and guide them. The world has perhaps changed little in this matter. At all times the majority of people think themselves tactful, think they know how to deal with others, when to be severe and when to be easy, when to praise and when to rebuke, and so forth. At all times they think that, if they sometimes make mistakes in such matters, it will not matter so much; that, in any case, such delicacy in dealing with people is a luxury rather than a duty; not everyone, perhaps they will say to themselves, is called to be a *Curé* of *Ars*.

The first thing one would note about these three early works on the priesthood is the emphatic way in which they reject such excuses. Gregory of Nazianzus tells us, and Gregory the Great repeats him, that the priestly life is the art of arts and science of sciences.⁵ He compares the lightheartedness with which men of his day undertook to be physicians of the soul with the sense of responsibility marking those who undertook to be physicians of the body. No one even then would dream of setting up in the latter calling without feeling confident of both his knowledge

⁴ St Gregory Naz., *Oratio II*, 4. Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, translated by C. Brown and Swallow, p. 205.

⁵ Gregory Naz., *Oratio II*, 16; Gregory the Great, *Pastoral Care I*, i.

and his skill. I think we could safely say that among Catholics today we do not deserve this reproach so much, though the fact that diseases of the soul are less visible may still tempt us to take a less grave view of our deficiencies than the medical profession. One reason is that mentioned by St Gregory Nazianzen, i.e. that our patients are not so co-operative as medical patients. The medical patient does not wait for the doctor to find him. He comes of his own accord and faithfully tells his symptoms. Not only this, but he usually takes considerable care to obey his doctor, at any rate if he is told that his illness is grave. Patients suffering from the disease of sin and vice are less apt to come to their spiritual physician to tell him of their disorders. And when they do come, as often as not they begin to make excuses calculated to disguise the real symptoms, and therefore the real nature, of the disease. Finally, even after they have been told that they are suffering from some grave disease of the soul, they easily forget to carry out the priest's prescriptions.

Besides such difficulties, it is a notoriously delicate matter to correct people. Sometimes it is wise to rebuke them severely, at other times more good is done by encouragement. A short passage from St Gregory the Theologian shows how well he realised the different treatment called for when dealing with 'men and women, young and old, rich and poor, sanguine and despondent, the sick and whole, rulers and ruled, the wise and ignorant, the cowardly and courageous, the wrathful and meek, the successful and failing', and numerous other varieties and temperaments. 'Some are benefited by praise, others by blame, both being applied in season; while if out of season, or unreasonable, they are injurious; some are set right by encouragement, others by rebuke; some, when taken to task in public, others when privately corrected. For some are wont to despise private admonitions, but are recalled to their senses by the condemnation of a number of people, while others, who would grow reckless under reproof openly given, accept rebuke because it is in secret, and yield obedience in return for sympathy.'⁶

The application of such pastoral principles forms the bulk of the *Pastoral Care* of Gregory the Great. He took the idea from Gregory Nazianzen, but has his own way of adapting them. Poor people must be approached gently and kindly and must be led on

⁶ Gregory Naz., op. cit., 31; trans. cit. p. 211.

to realise that only one kind of riches matters. Rich people must be warned severely against pride and the transitoriness of earthly goods; though, if their pride is excessive, gentleness may be the only method of approach. The priest should warn exuberant people that it is dangerous to become attached to earthly joys; while he should tell the melancholy to keep their eyes on eternity, and warn them of the dangers of depression. Subjects should be dealt with in one way, superiors in another. Learned people are to be warned to trust the foolishness of God before the wisdom of men; while dull people are to be encouraged to seek and love divine wisdom. Sensitive people would be unduly depressed by the forthright treatment that most benefits the insolent. Nor will the same methods serve to cure the patient and the impatient, the generous and the envious, the sincere and the hypocritical. The kind of treatment that will cure the sick man would not be suitable to the healthy. Taciturn people are to be induced to talk more and so be less tempted to brooding; while the talkative are to be told that 'the human mind behaves after the manner of water: when enclosed, it collects itself to the higher levels. . . . when released, it loses itself, in that it scatters itself to no purpose through the lowest levels. . . .'⁷

From this an idea can be gained of the valuable pastoral theology included in part III of the *Pastoral Care*. Clearly those who offer themselves for the priesthood must come with a full understanding of the responsibilities and difficulties of their calling. They need more than ordinary ability and experience.

St John Chrysostom has no lower an idea of priestly cares than the Gregories. He thinks of the priest more as shepherd and father than as physician. And, just as the Gregories find the priest's life harder and more important than that of the physician, so John Chrysostom finds it harder and more important than that of either shepherd or father, or even of ancient high priest or king. It is easier for the shepherd to discover the illnesses and troubles of sheep than for the priest to detect the weaknesses of human souls. And sheep can be compelled to take the proper remedies, while men with their free wills must be coaxed or threatened. And if one does succeed in forcing them, they are worse afterwards than before. The shepherd of men 'needs great wisdom and a thousand eyes, so as to examine the souls condition from every

⁷ St Gregory, *Pastoral Care*, p. 132.

side. As there are many men who become arrogant, and then despair of their own salvation because they cannot endure severe remedies, so there are some who, because they do not receive a punishment of equal magnitude with their offences, are led to think lightly of them, and become far worse, and are led on to commit greater sin.⁸ The superiority of priests over earthly fathers is clear when we consider that they give to their children spiritual and eternal life, while the latter can give only temporal life.

These fathers of the fourth and sixth century show us, in brief, how the priest's work is one of no small difficulty, calling for qualities that saints usually fear they do not possess.

Connected with this awareness of the great skill required in the priest is their appreciation of the evil of ignorance. The priesthood is the science of sciences as well as the art of arts. St John Chrysostom especially urges this. Though holiness and good works are demanded in him who will convince others of the truth of the doctrines he professes, he will never succeed without skill and training. In this John is a forerunner of St Teresa of Avila and St Francis of Sales. The former wrote about spiritual directors: 'It will help us very much to consult learned men, provided they are virtuous; even if they are not spiritual they will do us good and God will show them what they should teach and may even make them spiritual so that they may be of service to us.' (Complete Works, Trans. Allison Peers, vol. i, p. 81). We are told of St Francis of Sales: 'Those of you, he used to say, who find occupations which prevent them from studying, are like those who refuse solid food to their stomachs, giving it instead light meals, insufficient to support it. I tell you in truth that ignorance in priests is more to be feared than sin, because by it they not only lose themselves, but dishonour and cheapen the priesthood. I earnestly implore you, my very dear brethren, to give yourselves up seriously to study: knowledge in a priest is the eighth sacrament of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. . . . My dear brethren, since divine providence, without considering my unworthiness, has made me your bishop, I implore you to study all that is good, that being wise and of good life, you may be irreproachable and ready to give an answer to all those who question you on the things of the faith.' (Hamon, *Vie de S. François de Sales*, Bk. iv, ch. II.,

⁸ St John Chrysostom, *On the Priesthood*, Book 2, chapter 4, 113-114, translated by T. A. Moxon. S.P.C.K., pp. 46-48.

vol. i, p. 409.) St John Chrysostom, some thirteen centuries earlier, spoke with the same voice. After pointing out that, necessary as holiness is, learning is also required, he says: 'For though he himself stand rooted in safety, and be not injured by the gainsayers, yet, when the multitude of simpler folk, who are set beneath him, see their leader worsted and unable to answer the gainsayers, they do not blame his feebleness for the defeat, but the weakness of the doctrine; and, by reason of the inexperience of one man, the great multitude is brought into utter ruin. Though they may not utterly join the enemy, yet they are driven to doubt in matters wherein they might have been confident; and those whom they were wont to approach with unwavering faith, they hear no more with the same security; on the contrary, such a storm enters their souls by reason of their teacher's defeat that the evil ends in utter shipwreck.' (*On the Priesthood*, trans. p. 127.)

Who would dare to say that the dangers of ignorance have lessened since the fourth or sixteenth centuries? Pius XII certainly does not think so, since he is continually appealing to Catholics to help the Church in her war against religious ignorance. Those who proclaim that we want Curés of Ars rather than Aristotles usually forget that even the Curé had considerable ability in preaching, and that he would have been the last to admit that the priest can be holy and save the world, while disregarding the Church's insistence on learning. Such a priest falls short even in holiness.

Nor is it sufficient for the priest to be skilful in the art of directing souls and have sufficient knowledge, if he does not know how to preach in a manner that will bring glory to God. None could speak with more authority on this than the patron leader of ecclesiastical oratory. The priest must neither despise nor seek men's praise. If he despises it, he will develop into the bore, whom St John pictures as dragging on endlessly before a congregation whose one thought is, 'How much longer?'. If he seeks it, human respect will corrupt the pureness and sincerity of his preaching.

But all this is insufficient if the priest does not possess the holiness required by his dignity. No writer has surpassed St John Chrysostom in showing the connection between priestly sanctity and the Eucharist. This is but fitting in one who has been regarded as the Eucharist Doctor. 'When you see the Lord sacrificed and lying before you, and the priest standing over the Sacrifice, and

praying, and all who partake reddened with the Precious Blood, can you think that you are still among men, and standing on earth? Are you not straightway transported to heaven, and, having cast forth from your soul every fleshly thought, do you not, with naked souls and pure mind, look around upon the things of heaven. . . . ? He that sits above with the Father is, at the same time, held in our hands, and suffers himself to be clasped and embraced by those who wish; and all then do this by the eyes. . . . In the same passage he recalls the sacrifice of the Old Testament when Elias called down fire from heaven upon the sacrifice. How much more wonderful is the Eucharist. 'The priest stands bringing down not fire, but the Holy Spirit. . . . (*On the Priesthood*, Bk. ii, c. 4, pp. 61-63.)

St Chrysostom also bases the priest's dignity on his other functions, his power to forgive sins in baptism and penance, his fatherhood and pastoral care of his flock.

We shall not be surprised after this to find him supporting the doctrine that priestly sanctity should be greater than that of all others. 'Let those be brought before us who far excel all others, and are as much above the rest in spiritual qualities as Saul surpassed the whole nation of the Hebrews in bodily stature, or indeed much more. We must not be content to seek one who is head and shoulders taller; on the contrary, the difference between shepherd and sheep should be as great as the distinction between rational and irrational creatures, not to say even more; for matters of much greater importance are at stake.' (*Op. cit.*, Bk. ii, ch. 2, p. 43.) These words and similar ones must not be misunderstood by laymen as showing any sort of underestimation of their glory as members of God's people. Nor must they be understood to suggest that John denied that often there are lay saints and clerical sinners. He is merely insisting that, though laymen may be saints, the clergy are more to blame if they fall short of sanctity; and further that the likelihood of lay saints decreases where the clergy are sinners. For sanctity and perfection are in a very special sense part of the priest's office.

Like so many after him, St John Chrysostom considers the priest's duty of aiming at holiness and perfection as being far higher than that of the monk. 'He needs a far greater purity than they; and he who has the greater need is subject to more temptations which can defile him, unless he use unceasing self-denial and

much vigilance to keep his soul unsullied by those forces.' (Op. cit., Bk. vi, ch. 2, p. 142.) He bases this duty both on his relation to the Eucharist and on his office of interceding with God for his people. He must excel all, if he is to plead for the living and the dead. Further, his life must be in the midst of distractions and temptations, unlike the monk, who is helped by his retirement. He must be capable of listening to criticism and acting upon it, where possible gently removing the cause of the suspicion.

It is interesting here to recall that St Chrysostom's view of the greater duty of perfection resting on priests and bishops than on monks who have not these orders is shared by St Augustine. In one of his letters he complains that there was a popular saying at his time that a bad monk would make a good cleric. 'It is truly deplorable that we should exalt monks to so disastrous a pride and deem the clergy to whom we belong deserving of such contempt. For even a good monk will scarcely make a good cleric, though he be well enough disciplined, if he lacks the needful instruction or personal integrity.' (Epist. lx, P.L. 33, 228.)

This quotation from St Augustine prepares us to pass from the Greek St John Chrysostom, with his angelic eloquence, to the practical Roman, St Gregory the Great. Those who seek the honour of the priesthood, he declares, must first seek the work. Otherwise they stand convicted of preferring worldly gain to God's kingdom. Many, he admits, will declare that they come to work; they promise themselves they will do much good for the Church; but in their hearts, unknown to themselves, they merely want power and honour. This temptation was perhaps greater in the time of these fathers, when priests and bishops possessed great worldly power and honour. Today it would take the form of basking in the sunshine of good people's flattery and submission. When the superficiality and insincerity of such candidates is discovered, it is already too late. They find they have what they want, and spiritual thoughts are forgotten.

If men really approach the priesthood with the love of spreading God's kingdom, their first thought will be to show people in themselves the good life, to give an example of humility, not pride. The priest is God's friend, and must know his Master. Anyone unstable and of weak character, who cannot keep from sin, is unfit. This is most markedly so when his interests and cares concern earthly matters and his life is dulled by sensuality.

When he has once reached his position of authority, his conduct should as far surpass that of his people as his position does. His first interest must be the inner life. He must be pure and single of heart. This, in the language of Gregory, meant single-mindedness, a desire only to live a noble life, innocent, even in thought, of all avarice, pride or sensuality. His life must be one of charity and mortification. He should not be afraid to speak, yet should use this weapon with caution. He must be all things to all men, understanding their especial difficulties. Though himself given to contemplation of spiritual things, he must have a fellow-feeling for those whose lives must be spent in more earthly matters. He must discourage excessive veneration for himself, and must be ready to lose popularity when rebuking sinners. He must be able to remember, when he is rebuking people, that he is in his human nature no more than their equal. Further, he will not be able to retain the necessary inner life, unless he is careful to avoid too much preoccupation with externals.

All three Fathers whom we are discussing agree that nothing is more important for the shepherd of souls than the art of letting his light shine before men without getting corrupted by vain-glory. None has written more on this subject than St Gregory the Great. We priests read homilies of his on the subject almost day by day in our breviaries. If we let our light shine before men, they may praise us or they may persecute us. As far as we ourselves are concerned, we must learn to take praise and blame indifferently, provided it is our Christlikeness that is the subject of their comments. If they enjoy our sermons when we preach Christ, or if they approve of our true virtue, then God is glorified, and we have no other duty than to pray that the praise may not be turned to ourselves. It is St John Chrysostom who reminds us of the great privilege that is ours when we are persecuted and reviled for Christ's sake.

But, says St Gregory, men should not be careless in letting people misjudge them, and wrongly attribute evil. Such people 'do not, indeed, commit evil personally, yet in the persons of those who imitate them they do commit a multiple sin'. All who say the divine office will remember St Gregory's homilies. In the lesson for a Confessor not a Bishop, he says that the lamps to be carried by disciples represent the light of good example, without which even internal purity will not suffice. 'For we hold burning lanterns

our hands when, through good works, we show to our neighbours examples of light. About which words the Lord says: Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father, who is in heaven.' Similarly he writes in the homily we read for the office of Virgins: '...but by today's reading of the holy gospel I am compelled to say that even the good you do should be protected with great care; lest the desire of praise should creep in and what is outwardly displayed should inwardly be deprived of its reward'. He later says of the good people who live for the interior life, chastise the flesh, and have only eternity before them: 'These do not put their glory in the mouths of men, but hide it within their conscience. And there are so many who afflict their body by abstinence, but seek from that abstinence the favour of men.'

In the office for 'Non Virgins', he tackles more directly the apparent contradiction between giving good example and keeping our good works secret. His advice is that in intention we should do them before our heavenly Father, though for his sake we let them shine before men. 'In this matter it should be noted, that the treasure when found is hidden that it may be kept safe. For it is not enough to safeguard the zeal of our heavenly desires from evil spirits, if it is not also hidden from human praises. For in the present life we are as it were on the way to our heavenly country. Evil spirits waylay our path like robbers. He who carries his treasure openly on the highway is asking to be robbed. But I say this, not to prevent our neighbour seeing our good works, since it is written: *let them see your good works, and glorify your Father, who is in heaven*; but I mean that we should not look for outside praise for them. Let the work be in public, but in such a way that its intention is secret. Thus, we may both give example to our neighbours by our good work, and at the same time wish the work were hidden, by our intention only to please God.'

The same theme often recurs in the *Pastoral Care*. Those who do evil when not seen, but good in public in order to win men's praise, both glory in what is wrong and despise what is right. They despise what is right in that they do not mind throwing it away for a trifling price, giving that which deserves an eternal price for the price of human approval. They glory in what is wrong by doing it unashamedly in secret. On the other hand, we must not allow people to think evil of us falsely. And we must be ready

frequently to risk men's displeasure rather than shirk our duty. St John Chrysostom recalls in this connection the words of our Lord: 'Blessed are you, when men revile you, and persecute you, and speak all manner of evil against you falsely, because of me. Be glad and lighthearted, for a rich reward awaits you in heaven.'⁹

II

It would not be fitting to pass from the sixth century to the nineteenth without a word from St Thomas. In comparing the priesthood with the religious state, he declares that from one point of view it is a greater thing to dedicate oneself to the acquiring of holiness in the religious state than merely to dedicate oneself to the office of parish priest or vicar general. But he immediately states that this is on the assumption that the charity of one is not greater than that of the other.

But if, he says, one bears in mind the greater difficulties of the priest in the parish, and the external dangers he has to struggle against, then the parish priest needs greater charity; though, on the other hand, he allows that the very rule itself of the religious is a difficulty avoided by the former.

But finally he aligns himself with the Fathers of the first centuries by stating without reserve that the priest excels in dignity and consequently in his duty of perfection the unordained religious. 'For through holy orders a person is deputed to the most worthy ministry of serving Christ himself in the Sacraments of the Altar. For this, greater interior sanctity is required than for the religious state. . . . Hence, other things being equal, the cleric in sacred orders sins more gravely if he sins against holiness, than a religious who is not in sacred orders. . . .'¹⁰

Many treatises on the priesthood were of course written during the long gap between St Gregory the Great and the twentieth century. The fundamental principles have remained the same. In each period and country or diocese the attempt has been made to apply them in a practical way to special circumstances. Such a book is that, mentioned at the beginning of this article, by Mgr Hallett, which may be said to be a practical adaptation of them to the England of today. But, before passing on to consider that volume, a modern work on the lines of the early classics should

⁹ Matthew 5, 11-12 (Knox). St John Chrysostom, op. cit. book III, chapter II.

¹⁰ St Thomas, II-II; 184, 8.

first be noted. I refer to *The Eternal Priesthood*, by Cardinal Manning. It derives its wide and lasting popularity undoubtedly from the fact that it keeps so closely to its sources, Scripture, the Fathers and St Thomas. Its authority in many countries and languages is an indication that, like the earlier classics, it deals more with the principles than their application to special local conditions.

Cardinal Manning began, as was his custom, with theology, explaining how the priestly character gives the priest a share in Christ's consecration and self-oblation. Above all, it gives him a power and duties with regard to Christ's Body in the Blessed Sacrament. Christ entrusts that Body to his minister, who acts as his steward. The words pronounced by the minister in the supreme moment of sacrifice are Christ's words, and have divine power. This all unites the priest in an intimate way with Christ. 'He is servant, friend, companion.'¹¹ 'What more can be bestowed upon the priest? What obligation to perfection can exceed the obligation of such power, of such an office, and of such a living contact with the Word made flesh?' (Op. cit. p. 18.)

These reasons alone, he says, would make the priesthood the highest perfection on earth. But there is, added to this, the priest's jurisdiction over the mystical body. This means that he must be an example and a guide. 'The priest is set *exercere perfectionem*—that is, to manifest perfection in himself, and to form the souls of others to the same law and likeness. He must needs then be perfect first himself.' (Op. cit., p. 20.) To exercise perfection on others he must be himself in the state of perfection; though no generous priest could be satisfied merely to be, as it were, within the border.

In this way, Manning joins himself to the Fathers and to all who have written spiritual works on the priestly office. The priest is called both to a holier and to a more difficult life than even the religious without priesthood. Manning knew, as all have recognised, that unfortunately the priest is frequently less holy than others; but, true though this may be, he is the more guilty if he fails, since he is called to the highest. Manning deduces this from the priest's unity with the great High Priest, from his special discipleship of his Master, and, thirdly, from his commission to tend God's children, Christ's brethren.

He has been vigorously supported in this matter, as being one

¹¹ Manning, *Eternal Priesthood*, p. 16.

with all true Catholic tradition, by Canon E. J. Mahoney, in his masterly work on *The Secular Priesthood*. The latter draws the conclusion that students for the Church should be clearly taught that they have a duty to reach a certain degree of perfection before ordination; a perfection involving complete freedom from grave sin and a real determination to take all the means to advance continually in the pursuit of holiness.

This high thesis is in the greater part of Manning's book applied to practical life. The book is too well known for it to be necessary to give any analysis, for it will obviously be more convincingly mastered in Manning's own words.

III

And now, to pass on to the year 1950. Among the many valuable books on priestly work published during the present century, circumstances lead to our picking on the most recent and therefore least well-known. It is characteristic of recent works to spend much time on encouragement and practical helps towards our prayer. Perhaps this is because we are living in a world from which it is harder to escape; and which, owing to the ever-increasing variety and attractiveness of its distractions, is becoming less conducive to the prayer-atmosphere. By way of reaction against this, never before were the clergy so united in mind as to the importance of prayer and interior life, if we are to be priests in the modern world after Christ's heart. Bishops, professors, retreat-fathers and missionaries unite in appealing to us to recognise this. The Church's system of seminary and novitiate training has as one of its principal aims to teach it, and so deeply to implant it that nothing in the future life of the priest will seriously shake his conviction. That this conviction dies hard even in the slack priest speaks well for his early training. Ask any of the busy parish clergy to give a conference to priests or to write on the priestly life and he will teach this doctrine, though most of us feel guilty when it is preached to ourselves. But with all the practical helps we get, it often fails to take as practical a hold on our lives as we might well hope. We are skilful at procrastination, we are tempted to grow complacent about our fulfilment of external duties. Though successful there, are we successful in our interior life?

The principle of seminary training is twofold. First, the student is given a rule of life which includes all the essentials of the

spiritual life in a form best adapted to his particular vocation. This will help to form the right habits. But habits of virtue cannot be formed by acts of the body without the full co-operation of reason and will. This is why the second principle is far more important than the first, the instruction of the reason and the appeal to the will. This formation is done in a general way by means of theology, both dogmatic, which gives the doctrinal basis of all the spiritual life, and spiritual theology which studies the application of this doctrine to everyday life. The latter in practice studies the spiritual lives of saints and mystics in order to see how the Christian life has been applied by those who have been eminently Christlike in the past, as well as suggesting, by way of reasoning, ways and means of adapting Christianity to the life of the modern man. But lest even all this theology should remain a purely speculative possession, it has always been understood that few things are more important during this early period than spiritual conferences and private spiritual direction, which make a direct appeal to the individual's will and conviction. All these, especially the latter, are meant to give the priest at an early stage a personal interest and sense of obligation in the growth of his spiritual life. It is more important that he should be made to want to continue with his meditation, his spiritual reading and his rosary than merely that he should do these at the moment. It is more important to give him the right attitude to Mass and office than merely to insist on his taking part in them now. For he is being trained—especially if he is preparing for the secular priesthood—to be independent of the seminary. This is the reason why it is not easy to judge of the real success of a seminary's training by the external appearances of order and discipline. The latter are naturally good, and, if accepted in the true spirit, must have great value for all concerned. But the real test is whether the students are acquiring a deep conviction of the importance of continuing to grow in the spiritual life after they have left the seminary.

M^r Hallett, as is evident from his delightful posthumous book *The Priest—Friend of Christ*, had spent many years instilling these truths into the minds of his students in as uncompromising a way as possible. A priest is not an officer called upon to perform certain services, and free once he has performed them. He is never free from his duty, since the service to which he is called is one of

unreserved surrender, in close friendship with his Master. It is peculiar to friendship that the interests of the parties are mutual and common. This involves knowing one another intimately and at all times being at the personal and loving service of each other. It is this principle of friendship which is the root of the many duties of the priest which come under the heading of his spiritual life, which form the subject-matter of this book. The priest must continually meditate on his divine friend if he is to acquire and maintain real friendship. He must read about him, fill his mind with thoughts of his friend and that friend's interest. This means of course the constant practice of mental prayer. Mgr Hallett, like all who have written on the priesthood, insists that there is no short-cut to this intimacy with Christ. One must proceed by way of meditation. On the other hand, he has many practical suggestions as to the methods of meditation. He shows that much fear of meditation comes from a wrong idea of what it means and of what it is attempting.

We said at the beginning that it is more important what a priest is than what he does. He can only become another Christ by continual association with Christ. If he will be the friend of Christ, he must be filled with Christ, he must do everything in a spirit of recollection and union with him. This will enable Christ to use him, and the extent to which Christ will be able to act through him will be identical with the extent to which he already possesses his heart.

The busy priest who has long been struggling with problems in his parish, whose whole day seems filled with activities that he cannot avoid, is the one most tempted gradually to acquiesce in a feeling of complacency that he is doing all he can be expected to do, and that if God wants him to pray then God must either find him another position or lighten his burden of work. Mgr Hallett sympathises with such a priest's problem, but advises first that he must never allow this temptation to distort his view of the supreme importance for everyone, above all for every priest, of the interior life, no matter how many calls there may appear to be to neglect it for the sake of works. Some of the works, good as they undoubtedly are, must be sacrificed for something better, the priest's personal duty to his divine friend. The loss is only apparent and temporary, for the value of all activities will increase immeasurably by the closer union of the priest with his Master.

that results from the extra time he is able to spend in prayer. Some activities doubtless, such as sick-calls, must take precedence over everything, but frequently these can themselves be done in such a spirit of recollection that they become a continuation and application of the priest's interior life instead of a distraction. They thus become prayer, rather than works.

But, Mgr Hallett goes on to point out, no matter how active is the priest's life, there are certain spiritual duties which he can never normally escape, if he does his priestly duty. The first of these is his mass and the second his office. It is characteristic of Mgr Hallett's sound common sense and moderation that he strives to persuade the priest who is otherwise finding himself so taken up by his busy life to use to the utmost as means of his spiritual growth these two offices of the Church's liturgy, which so surpass the rest of a Christian's spiritual life. He shows here his knowledge of human psychology and his severely practical turn of mind. He advises, for instance, to use the utmost reverence and care to express our faith in the actions of the mass. Such care will not only be a result and an expression of our faith, but will actually help it. For man is always affected by what he does, and still more by the way he does it. The man who genuflects reverently actually grows in his faith and love and sense of adoration. Similarly, preparation for mass and thanksgiving after mass can be such as not only to express our devotion, but also to increase it, for the same psychological reasons. Mgr Hallett makes a still greater effort to induce us to say our office profitably and prayerfully. Once again he gives a deal of sound practical advice. He suggests that we should choose our time and place, taking care not to begin office until duly settled down. Likewise he considers the habit of saying office in trams and buses as normally unwise. Rather we should have what Cardinal Manning called five-minute books, which we can read on such occasions. He has much to suggest concerning the principal part of the office, the psalms. He has himself worked out a scheme to make the recital of psalm 118, which so often recurs, a prayer of real value and an expression of our spiritual life. He also offers useful suggestions towards a more spiritual recital, such as that we should decide each time whether they will best be recited in the person of Christ, in the person of the Church or in our own person.

The life of friendship with Christ is not only a life of prayer, it

must also be a life of virtue. Here Mgr Hallett has much that is both inspiring and practical to offer. Humility should be a distinguishing virtue. We should prove in our lives the falseness of the popular non-Catholic view that a priest is proud and tyrannical. Humility will lead to most of the other virtues we need: obedience to the bishop, love for the people, patience, courtesy. We should take as our motto that glorious title of the Pope, that we are the servants of the servants of God. Among these other virtues, obedience, brotherly love and zeal for God's house are picked out. Above all it is important to retain idealism, even though at times it leads to mistakes. 'It has been often said, a man who never makes mistakes, never makes anything.' Mgr Hallett is well aware how easy it is to lose one's idealism through discouragement. This is a far greater danger for the priest than inactivity. 'Like our Lord, we are set for the fall as well as for the resurrection of many. We must bear our witness. Some will reject it; some will accept it. Not even our Lord himself was able to convert all; even he met with disbelief.' (p. 97.) Nothing can be gained by looking at the black side of things. We shall find it easier to keep up our ideals if we are optimists.

Mgr Hallett's book is indeed packed with common sense, and will be eagerly read, not only by his former students, who had the privilege of listening to these talks when first given, but by all of us. Perhaps those who are concerned with the training of the clergy will feel a special interest. It is encouraging to find that Mgr Hallett takes very strongly the attitude of St Thomas towards the secular priesthood which was defended by Cardinal Manning, and supported by Canon Mahoney, that the priest as such, even the secular priest, is called to a higher degree of perfection than the religious who are not ordained. The fact that he may not be called to the particular means of perfection to which the religious is called in no sense excuses him from the full pursuit of holiness. If he happens to be a secular priest, he has an especially difficult task, to reach a holiness greater than that of the laity and even the non-ordained religious, while still being forced to live in the world without the particular help of community life. This obligation was sometimes lost sight of, through a misunderstanding of the term, 'state of perfection', and also through forgetting that the priest today is practically always committed to the cure of souls or some other work for the Church which he may not desert.

and is therefore as fully dedicated for life to all that the pastoral priesthood means as any religious is dedicated to his life. The popes have done all they can to impress this truth upon us in recent times. Pius X, in a passage Mgr Hallett quotes, uses the striking words: '...between the priest and the average good man there ought to be as much difference as between heaven and earth: wherefore the holiness of the priest should be immune not only from graver sins, but even from the very slightest'.¹² The growing understanding of this has led to a continual approximation of the spiritual training and life of the secular priest to that of priests in religious communities. It is in harmony with this spirit that the Archbishop of Birmingham has introduced a house of preparation, where students go for a year before entering the seminary, where they are given the beginnings of a spiritual formation analogous to that given to religious in their novitiate. It is impossible to have too many books of this type, written from a long life's experience, so helpful in enabling other priests to profit by the thoughts, prayers and struggles of their colleagues.

¹² Pius XI, *Haerent Animo*, Mgr Hallett, op. cit., p. 12.

ECCLESIASTICAL OBEDIENCE

By R-B. ROBERT, P.S.S.*

[The article translated below appeared in the *Ami du Clergé*, 26th January, 1950, in response to a request expressed as follows:

'The ideas about obedience current among seminarists and even the younger clergy are often far removed from the formula: the Superior is the representative of God. Obedience is given when the order is agreeable or when the Superior is sympathetic. But to obey precisely because the Superior is God's representative is becoming more and more a rare thing, and as for the '*etiam dyscolis*' of St Peter, it is quite out of date.

On this question of obedience among the diocesan clergy, so important at the moment, will the *Ami* put before us the teaching of the Gospels, St Paul and papal documents, and show what is the part it plays in our life?'—Translator.]

FOR those who are of the diocesan clergy, the undisputed authorities must naturally be our Lord himself, St Paul and the Popes: from them we shall seek for the principles of our conduct, and then consider the practical application of those principles to our lives.

THE PRINCIPLES INVOLVED

I. Our Lord instructs us both by his teaching and by his example. At Jacob's well we hear these surprising words: 'My meat is to do the will of him (the Father) that sent me' (Jn. 4, 34). Again, in the sermon on the Mount, after the Beatitudes: 'Not everyone that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doth the will of my Father who is in heaven' (Matt. 7, 21). To the cry of admiration that went up from the crowd, 'Blessed is the womb that bore thee and the paps that gave thee suck', our Lord answered, 'Yea rather, blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it'—whence it follows that if the two could be dissociated, Mary would be less blessed in her divine motherhood than as the perfect 'handmaid of the Lord'.

The acid test of charity is obedience: 'If you love me, keep my commandments' (Jn. 14, 15); 'You are my friends, if you do the things that I command you' (Jn. 15, 14); 'He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me' (Jn. 14, 21).

* Translated by Canon Bernard Wall.

True obedience is inspired by charity, not by fear or self-interest or routine; on the other hand, genuine charity is expressed in obedience. It is this alone that will win through at the last: 'He that doth the will of God abideth for ever' (1 Jn. 2, 17). Here we find the spirit of the beatitudes in all its purity.

On this teaching of our Lord an intense light is shed from his own example. From the outset, beginning with the miracle at Cana, he speaks of 'his hour', that is to say, the manifestation of his Father's will, for him always decisive: 'The Son cannot do anything of himself, but what he seeth the Father doing: for what things soever he doth, these the Son also doth in like manner' (Jn. 5, 19). This all-sustaining, all-pervading, all-enveloping will is crystallised at times in a concrete fixed purpose, a clear-cut demand, making known to Jesus what it would have him do. It is 'his hour'. (Cf. Jn. 7, 6, 8; 8, 20; 12, 20-28; 13, 1; 17, 1.)

But *the hour par excellence*, the hour to which all others led and for which he came, is the hour of Redemption. 'Not what I will, but what thou wilt; not as I will, but as thou wilt' (Mk. 14, 36; Matt. 26, 39). A mysterious sacrifice—a bewildering human failure, yet source of universal liberation: 'In the which will we are sanctified by the oblation of the body of Christ, once' (Heb. 10, 10).

To reach this hour in perfect realisation of his Father's will, Jesus began by resisting the threefold temptation, ever-present to any apostolate: putting spiritual gifts at the service of his own personal and material interests, exercising the apostolate through the use of power, exercising the apostolate for the benefit of power¹ — all characteristic of Jewish messianism and the expression of profound human tendencies. (Cf. Matt. 4, 1-16.)

2. St Paul teaches us 'his ways' (1 Cor. 4, 17), that is, his moral doctrine, whose standard is the will of God (Rom. 12, 2; Ephes. 5, 17-2; Heb. 10, 36), that will which is revealed in the commands of civil authority. Of religious authority he speaks in Hebrews 13, 17: 'Obey your prelates and be subject to them: for they watch as being to render an account of your souls; that they may do this with joy, and not with grief. For this is not expedient for you.' (Cf. also 1 Thess. 5, 12, 13): 'We beseech you, brethren, to know them who labour among you, and are over you in the

Henri Dumery, *Les trois tentations de l'apostolat moderne*, p. 220.
F. Prat, S.J., *La Théologie de Saint Paul*, II, p. 382, ff.

Lord, and admonish you: that you esteem them more abundantly in charity for their work's sake'.

St Paul reveals to us in their utmost depth what were the dispositions of the Word at the moment he became priest through the Incarnation, and the following passage will ever remain for priests a key-text on the priestly spirit: 'Sacrifice and oblation thou wouldst not: but a body thou hast fitted to me (*sed aures aperuisti mihi* is the version in the new translation of the Psalter, *Fer. 3a, ad Tertiam*) . . . Sacrifices and oblations and holocausts for sin thou wouldst not. . . . Then said I: Behold I come to do thy will, O God. . . . In the which will we are sanctified by the oblation of the body of Jesus Christ, once' (Heb. 10, 5, 7, 10).

These dispositions were strengthened in suffering: 'And whereas indeed he was the Son of God, he learned obedience by the things which he suffered' (Heb. 5, 8); and the upward sweep of the Incarnation-Redemption, wholly animated with this spirit, is engraved in the sublime text: 'Christ Jesus, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant. . . . he humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross. For which cause God also hath exalted him, and hath given him a name which is above all names: that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father' (Philipp. 2, 6-11; cf. Heb. 2, 6-11; 12, 2-3).

The *Consummatum est* of Calvary meant simply the profound consciousness of this the Father's will now perfectly fulfilled.

Naturally, the teaching of the Popes inculcates the general duty of obedience to constituted authority by commenting on the text given above from the Epistle to the Romans. It brings out fairly clearly the limits of all obedience according to the mind of St Peter and the Apostles (Acts 5, 29): 'There is only one valid reason for refusing obedience: where a command is quite evidently contrary to natural and divine law, for then it is a question of violating either the law of nature or the will of God; both the command itself and the carrying out of the command will be equally sinful'.³

³ Leo XIII, *Diuturnum illud*. (Leonis XIII Allocutiones, etc., ed. Desclee, I, p. 215.) Cf. Henri Brun, *La Cité Chrétienne* (Bonne Presse) p. 175.

And now for that obedience which is common to the whole Church: 'Just as in the exercise of their episcopal powers bishops must be in union with the Apostolic See, so must the members of the clergy and laity live in close union with their bishops. Should a bishop lay himself open to criticism either in his conduct or in holding certain views, no individual has the right to arrogate to himself the office of judge. . . . Everyone should engrave on his memory the wise teaching of Pope St Gregory the Great: Subjects must be careful not to pass rash judgment on the lives of their superiors, even when they see them acting in a manner worthy of censure. . . . They must be forewarned against the danger of setting themselves rashly in opposition to superiors whose faults are known to them. Even though superiors be really open to censure in their actions, nevertheless their subjects, deeply penetrated with the fear of God, should not pass interior judgment on them except in the spirit of ever-respectful submission. . . .'"⁴

'It is Jesus Christ who rules (the Churches) through the voice and jurisdiction of each one of the bishops. . . .'⁵

'We must accustom ourselves to see in the Church the Person of Christ. . . . To the extent that Christians bring themselves really to live by this living spirit of faith. . . . they will accord due honour and submission to the more exalted members of this Mystical Body, to those especially who by ordinance of the divine Head will have one day to render an account of our souls.' (Cf. Heb. 13, 5.)⁶

'The Church', wrote Bossuet, 'is Jesus Christ spread abroad and communicated, is Jesus Christ in his completeness, is Jesus Christ perfect man, Jesus Christ in his fulness.'⁷

Naturally, these general principles on obedience will apply even more rigidly to the priest. Pius XI, in his Encyclical on the Priesthood, recalls successively: first, the necessity of obedience, an obedience to which indeed we have pledged ourselves: 'This obedience the priest promised his Bishop immediately after his priestly anointing'. Second, this promise must be kept: 'Let obedience therefore bind ever more closely the different members of the sacred Hierarchy one with another and with the Supreme Pontiff, thus making the Church militant a thing of terror to the

Leo XIII, *Sapientiae Christianae*, *ibid.* IV, p. 23; cf. Brun, p. 303.

Pius XII, *Encycl. Mystici Corporis*.

Ibid.

Bossuet, *Lettres de Piété et de Direction*, Lettre iv.

enemies of God . . . ' On penalty of bringing the gravest dangers upon the Church, let obedience 'assign to each one his part and his competence; let each one, too, accept them without demur, for resistance can only spoil the magnificent work the Church fulfils in the world'.

Thirdly, obedience is to be given in a spirit of abiding faith:

'Let each one see in the measures taken by his hierarchical superiors measures taken by the one true Head, Jesus Christ our Lord, who for us was made obedient unto death, even the death of the cross . . . wishing to show that even the most burning zeal must ever be profoundly submissive to the will of the Father; that is to say, ever regulated by obedience to those our lawful superiors, who for us take the place of the Father and make known to us his desires.'

We may conclude, then, that if charity is the bond of perfection (Col. 3, 14), one of the essential strands in that bond is obedience. There is no genuine, profound, sincere, christian, priestly obedience without charity; neither is there true charity without obedience.

In what way are these principles to rule our lives?

THE REALISATION OF THESE PRINCIPLES

To make the will of God take root in our lives through love is the whole sum of christian life: 'Thy kingdom come, thy will be done'. In order to do this we must discover what that will is, must welcome it in a certain spirit, must realise it.

1. The will of God is made clear to us in a series of gradually narrowing concentric circles, each one, if it is to be authentic, being enclosed in the circle preceding it. In the first place there are the commandments of God and the Church; then there are the duties of our state defined by our office or mission; then the wishes expressed in the orders of superiors, those also pointed to by Providence; and lastly, the inspirations of the Holy Spirit.

To the orders of superiors these words of our Lord have strict application: 'He that heareth you, heareth me: and he that despiseth you, despiseth me. And he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me' (Luke, 10, 16).

The juridical and canonical Church, let us never forget, is but the necessary expression of the Church of love.

'In the authentic letters of St Ignatius of Antioch, at the dawn of the second century, the terminology relating to the ecclesias-

al hierarchy, and the characteristics of that hierarchy, are already finitely fixed. There is the bishop, and never more than one; ere are the priests, intimately associated with the bishop, and so ited among themselves as to be normally referred to under the llective name of the "presbyterium" or sacerdotal college. . . . he two lower orders (priests and deacons) are united with the hop as strings to a lyre. There is but one Eucharist, but one resh of Christ, but one chalice of his Blood, but one altar, but e bishop with the priesthood and the deacons.'⁸

Pre-eminently, sacerdotal charity 'makes us love as members of e body; obedience, in its turn, makes us will what we do as embers of the body. Both therefore, from different yet allied ints of view, contribute to making us parts attached to their e whole: the one, charity, by co-ordinating us with the rest of e parts, the other, obedience, subordinating us to the whole.'⁹

The question has been discussed as the nature of the promise e priests of the diocesan clergy have made.

'Canonists. . . . comparing it with the vow the religious takes the day of his profession, have hesitated to give it the same orous character. But they have failed to see that the two are of ally different orders. The vow taken by the religious is to be ssed (primarily) among the means of personal perfection; the omise made by the priest is of the apostolic and pastoral order. he may aim at perfection without entering religion and taking e vow of obedience; but without submission to the bishop there n be no dedication to the service of the apostolate. Here it is a uestion of the very structure of the Church, of the priesthood, of e apostolate.'¹⁰

Pius XI expressly underlined this, in the passage quoted above, pointing out the dangers the Church would incur through any laxation of priestly obedience.

Further, a decision made by authority which in our eyes is a d decision, as indeed it may well be, will become the best ssible if all labour wholeheartedly together in carrying it out: r any company the safest road is the one all travel together.

. Prat, *ibid.* I, pp. 407-408. See there the references to St Ignatius of Antioch.

Emile Mersch, S.J., *Morale et Corps Mystique*, I, p. 119.

A. G. Martimort, *De l'évêque* (La Clarté Dieu, XIX, Ed. du Cerf), pp. 66-67—a uable little book, extremely suggestive and concrete, which makes us hope for a *Episcopo*'. Cf. *Pour le Clergé Diocésain* (Ed. du Vitrail) p. 55—one of the best general tributions on the spirituality of the diocesan clergy.

It would, of course, be useless to hide from ourselves that superiors have their failings, that their office has its dangers. This was realised by St John Chrysostom: 'It is one of the most dangerous failures with superiors, and at the same time one of the commonest, to refuse to take account of the views of others, to have their own way as if they were absolute masters, whereas they are only stewards'.¹¹

They must not forget that authority does not work within them like a sacrament, *ex opere operato*.

'When they make decisions, they may be deceived; they may administer their diocese, their parish, more or less well. Their lack of knowledge or their failings may diminish the effect of the message they transmit, whilst on the other hand their holiness will urge souls on to conform to that message.'¹²

In every society superiors are necessary, since it is the exercise of genuine authority that gives to the society its 'form' by directing it to its end. In the Church, normally, they are a blessing, but sometimes a trial too: yet every priest knows that a trial bravely endured is a blessing indeed.

'Superiors are neither infallible nor inspired, nor, necessarily at any rate, even very intelligent or very saintly. St Ignatius, who knew all about obedience, envisages quite naturally and calmly that a superior may be wholly unfitted for his position. Yet his conclusion is that nothing is thereby changed so far as obedience is concerned, any more than (to use a halting comparison) the Real Presence is in any way diminished because of the poor quality of the flour used in making the hosts.'¹³

Consequently, the last word must always be with obedience. Now let us consider in what spirit obedience should be given.

In our state of life the essential element governing its spirit is found expressed in the words immediately following the 'form' of the rite of ordination to the priesthood: *Sint providi cooperatores Ordinis nostri*.

'The priesthood is a participation in the sacerdotal office of the bishop. . . . It must not be imagined that to remind the priest of his fundamental, essential dependance on the bishop is to lower his dignity. On the contrary, it is to set that eminent dignity once

¹¹ C. Spicq, O.P., *Spiritualité Sacerdotale d'après Saint Paul* ('Lectio Divina' 4, Ed. du Cerf) p. 151.

¹² Cardinal Suhard, *Le Pretre dans la Cité*, cf. *New Life*, August, 1950.

¹³ E. Mersch, op. cit. p. 66.

gain before his eyes; for were he to imagine himself alone in his activities and independent, he would be tempted to make of his work a human work. . . . he would fail to recognise his true strength, which does not depend on his own personal virtues, but derives from its being rooted in apostolic tradition, from its being founded in the *Catholica*, the Church of East and West.' 14

Our state of life demands an 'active' obedience: '*PROVIDI operatores. . . .*' We must enter into it with all our natural resources supernaturalised. To obey is to 'will with' by a whole-hearted co-operation, not simply material but formal. To will thus with the whole of one's local Church, with the whole Church, is not this already to rise above the personal element?

But our obedience will also have a sense of its responsibilities. It may be that in the judgment of the subject, and relatively to the particular sphere of which he has an intimate knowledge, the orders he has received will be ineffective or dangerous or even extremely harmful, and this clearly so. In such a case he has not only the right but the duty, with all due respect and reverence, to inform the superior, who perhaps has not realised it. Though the following passage refers to the relations of priests with their bishop, it applies also, *mutatis mutandis*, to the relations with any ecclesiastical superior.

'This union with his bishop is for the priest a source of great confidence. . . . Yet it may have cost him heroic efforts. For the Holy Ghost does not guarantee infallibility to each bishop individually, still less sinlessness. Consequently, in following his bishop he does not escape a certain risk: he may find himself at times in disagreement on some doctrinal matter, on some method to be employed in the apostolate. . . . Will the priest in that case cling to his own judgment, simply recognising the fact that it is not in accord with the bishop's? Will he, in spite of the bishop, follow his own opinion, apply his own personal methods? Will he, where there is a conflict of views, take the part of another bishop against his own? He cannot if he is fully alive to the pledge his priesthood involves. There is a solidarity between him and his bishop whereby he is in duty bound to submit to the bishop what he demurs to, what he finds difficult or open to objection: *In faciem ei restiti quia reprehensibilitis erat* (Galat. 2, 21). Obviously such steps must be taken with respect and reverence and in a

spirit of faith. Above all they presuppose the virtue of fortitude and a disregard for human considerations. They are indispensable if that unity which our apostolate demands is to be preserved and a profound peace maintained. When a priest indulges in criticisms of his bishop in private or in public, it is but a noisy way of stifling the voice of conscience urging him to go and open his heart to him.' 15

If the command is insisted upon, what is the priest to do then? He can still ask, in all humility, that the order be imposed in the name of the obedience he has promised. This is a declaration in a consecrated formula that the superior takes sole responsibility with all the consequences.

And if the command now judged to be not only dangerous but obviously harmful is still insisted on, what then? If it is not evidently contrary to the law of God or that of the Church, if it does not clearly go beyond the sphere of obedience, then *obedience-service will yield to obedience-sacrifice: obedience must be given*, even though, apart from the difficulties mentioned above, it means doing an unfairness, even an injustice, to the subject.

This obedience-sacrifice, the closest possible imitation of our Lord's example, is founded upon the supernatural reality of the Church: its work, being Christ's own work, can be carried out through means quite out of proportion to the goal it seeks, out of proportion especially with means that are purely 'reasonable'.

St Ignatius has termed such obedience 'as it were blind',¹⁶ a qualification the modern spirit has little taste for. Yet, if it is considered as manifesting the spirit of faith, it is seen to be singularly 'clairvoyant', functioning in the clearest light, not of mere natural reasons, but of faith, convinced that at 'the very moment self is renounced and the most intimate, compelling inclinations are sacrificed. . . . the imperishable common good is assured. So soon as worldly efficiency is disowned, at that very moment the power of the supernatural begins to work and with effect.'¹⁷

The ultimate basis of obedience-sacrifice is confidence in Christ assisting his Church, confidence also in the Church, able to transform into a source for good the mistakes, even the culpable

15 Ibid. p. 67-68.

16 A. de Bovis, S.J., *De l'Obéissance à l'Eglise*, in *Nouvelle Revue Théologique*, Jan. 1948 pp. 20-47. (Certain ideas which could only be touched upon here are there vigorously developed.)

17 Ibid.

mistakes of superiors, and that through the heroic obedience of their subjects.

There are times, of course, when 'we require the faith of the good thief to discern the divinity of the Church behind the temporal features'.¹⁸ 'Moreover, those who are truly obedient are not timid nonentities who can be moulded and twisted at will; they are persons to be reckoned with, persons of decision.'¹⁹

'Ordinarily, it is those parts of the machinery doing the most work which require the closest adjustment to the rest; it is the priest, the missionary, the apostle, who require to be most closely linked with a work to which they would dedicate themselves ever more wholeheartedly.'²⁰

The plan of the Redemption continues to be realised far more effectively through sacrifice than through genius, still more when genius itself is sacrificed. God may allow all our best ideas, our most efficient collaboration to be set aside, assuring us of an unimaginable compensation at the cost of our sacrifice.

3. A word about the realisation of this spirit as it affects, not only the priest, but the seminarist also.

Seminarists belong to the diocesan clergy from the day of their ordination through tonsure. From that time they must begin labour for their Church in union with the bishop—*providi operatores Ordinis nostri* even before the phrase strictly applies.

They require a keenness in their sense of the supernatural increasing more than ordinary to be convinced that the vocation to which they are called, obedience-service, is in fact realised essentially during their period of formation in obedience-asceticism, for the training of the will, purifying it, giving it flexibility and self-mastery.

And so with the unreflecting there is induced a strong feeling of unease, of being stifled; and the reason in part is this. By his vocation and therefore by reason of certain capabilities he possesses, the seminarist is destined for obedience-service; yet for long years he is asked to practise obedience-asceticism almost exclusively. He does not grasp as clearly as he should that the greatest wish of his bishop, the greatest service he can render the Church, is that he prepare and make perfect the servant of to-morrow through the asceticism of today. It does not occur to him

Cardinal Suhard, *Essor ou Déclin de l'Eglise* (Ed. du Vitrail), p. 19.
E. Mersch, op. cit. p. 269.

20 Ibid. p. 121.

that his dreams about carrying out some sort of ministry now or in the future (apart from a ministry, judiciously organised, designed to give him practice or to make contacts) are so many forms of escapism, deflecting him from the appropriate service incumbent upon him now in co-operation with the bishop's threefold ministry—in *teaching*, to prepare himself for it by a sustained, penetrating study, which in mastering the fundamental themes will enable him to adapt them to widely different needs—in *ruling*, to learn to direct, to govern others by submitting himself now to direction, getting into the way of ruling self, striving unceasingly for self-mastery and self-control—in *sanctifying*, to surrender himself completely to grace so that tomorrow, with all the heaped-up powers given him in the priesthood, his may be a spirituality that is contagious.

A magnificent programme this, which, in laying down in the soul the firm foundations of the priesthood, prepares the way for its application to many varied and unexpected fields.

For those already priests, the spirituality of the diocesan clergy is distinguished by three characteristics: 'the bond between them and the bishop, a father to his priests; the communal character of the diocese; the pastoral mission'.²¹ All these, obviously, can be realised only through obedience.

They should gladly remember that the Pontifical 'insists at length on their quality as auxiliaries subordinate to the bishop. This is their grand title to glory, their very definition. By virtue of their intimate dependence on the bishop they, with him and under his direction, are charged with extending the Redemption through the world in the exercise of apostolic charity.'²²

Sustained by their sense of the local Church²³ and a correct, profound *mystique* concerning the hierarchy, convinced also that 'without a deep, filial respect for the Pastor of the diocese, *Sacerdos et Pontifex*, fullest expression of Christ's Pontificate, there can be no Apostles',²⁴ they will accept whole-heartedly the orders they are given, presenting as occasion demands whatever information may be necessary. Then, if in the circumstances explained above the order is insisted upon, they will comply with all their hearts, convinced that an order, which in a particular instance may

²¹ *Pour le Clergé Diocésain*, p. 135.

²² Eugène Masure, *Pretres Diocésains* (Lille), p. 75; cf. pp. 70-74.

²³ *Pour le Clergé Diocésain*, pp. 131-132.

²⁴ *Essor ou Déclin de l'Eglise*, p. 56.

all disaster and in the generality a low standard, will in practice for the best, provided all unite to make it a success.

Among the diocesan clergy the priest who has a sense of his duty must experience an instinctive aversion to any personal element intruded in his work. Instinctively he will labour 'to promote joint effort in the apostolate itself, to de-personalise the priestly ministry in favour of the whole group'. Here we have applied the principle of the indivisible priesthood, so dear to the Fathers of the Church following St Paul. The faithful must not be in a position to say, 'I am of Paul, I am of Apollo', but only, 'I am of the Church, I am of Christ'.²⁵

Priests and militants cannot remain in isolation without danger and the risk of being ineffective. The guarantee for their superior life, as also for their moral perseverance and mutual commitment, lies in the community; and this does not necessarily consist in a physical dwelling together. Above all it presupposes the Holy Spirit. It would have the messengers of the Gospel not to act the rôle of sharpshooters, but to surrender themselves to joint action in a convergence of views and methods. The return will be increased tenfold. The Christian (and the priest) in isolation is a tiny islet in a watery waste of indifference.²⁶

Every priest should keep continuously before his mind that he is the heir to yester-year, with the responsibility this heritage entails, and that he is preparing the way for tomorrow.

'Juridical membership of the Church calls for a like membership that is also mystical and vital; the visible union expresses a like union through grace in charity and obedience. The more profound the incorporation into the body of the Church, the more necessary is the vocation to give her obedience, the more necessary, too, is the obedience itself to be inspired by a highly delicate, generous charity.'²⁷

Thus it is that in the Church those in religion are more rigorously vowed to ecclesiastical obedience than are the simple laymen, priests more than them all. Ordained after incardination to their local Church to labour always and exclusively in active co-operation with the bishop, they are ever ready for action in the service of the diocese, a service pursued with zeal and prudence; and careful, too, to practise through that service a sure way of

Pour le Clergé Diocésain, p. 149.
Cf. A. de Bovis, loc. cit. p. 46.

26 *Essor ou Déclin de l'Eglise*, p. 54.

personal asceticism arising from the duties of their state. Nevertheless, they will, if need be, accept obedience-sacrifice in the clear light of faith, uniting themselves as closely as possible with the spirit of the Redemption—that obedience which was the main-spring in the life and passion of our Lord. Here is realised in an eminent degree the text, ‘I fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ’ (Col. 1, 24); here, too, is realised the final commission given to the priest at his ordination, ‘Bear in mind what you do, let your conduct be in conformity with the action you perform, so that as you celebrate the mystery of the Lord’s death, so will you take care to mortify your members from every vice and concupiscence’. This priestly obedience is for the life of the Church the choicest form of the *opus operantis* in the Redemption. In the last resort, therefore, obedience is simply the most expressive form charity takes when, refusing to be content with fine words, she seeks a real union with him whom she loves, whom also she would closely imitate, the more effectively to further the redeeming work of him who is the Lord Jesus.

‘The priesthood is not a derived function (in the body social): it is not something artificial, an arbitrary product of our passing, incomplete (social) systems. It is not an incidental, an outward ritual garb; it affects the priest in his very being.... [It] is not something to be invented, it exists. In a sense it is not something but Someone.’²⁸ Its innermost spirit will ever be found expressed in that text from the Epistle to the Hebrews: ‘Then said I: Behold I come to do thy will, O God’ (10, 7). For the priest, charity is first embodied in obedience, which will preserve for the evangelical office its rightful structure, undivided and communal. The Apostolate is the activity of the Church.²⁹

Actuated by this spirit, ‘our diocesan clergy has also had its heroes, its saints. Of their virtue, a virtue of no mean order, we know the secret. Priests from our own land, they were nurtured from its soil. Where they were born, there they lived. As clerics they made it their choice, the Holy Ghost choosing for them. As priests, *they dedicated themselves to it—a mystical union this, a sublime contract, binding them indeed, but with a chain they hold dear and to a task that transfigures them.* Their regard for their beginnings has traced for them their destiny, and when the oak falls, it is on the spot that saw its seeding.’³⁰

²⁸ *Le Pretre dans la Cité*, p. 49.

²⁹ *Ibid.* p. 83.

³⁰ *Ibid.* pp. 90-91.

SAYING MASS WITH DEVOTION

By G. D. SMITH

SUPPOSE it is the experience of nearly every priest that in the course of time his outlook on the daily offering of the Mass undergoes a considerable change. At first the thought uppermost in my mind as I say Mass is that what I am doing is very *wonderful*. It may be because the theology of the Eucharist is still fresh in the memory; but, whatever the reason, the aspect of the Mass that chiefly appeals in those early days is what theologians describe as *ex opere operato*: I am above all intensely conscious of the marvellous power which God is manifesting in and through myself. At my words bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of Christ, in my person the Word Incarnate is offering himself in sacrifice to his Father. It is with a feeling of awe, almost of fear, that I tremblingly handle the frail host and gaze wonderingly in the chalice at the blood which Christ has shed for me. And this sentiment, mingled with a feeling of exhilaration, which holds me when I realise that I am acting as God's minister in the miracle of transsubstantiation, is so overpowering that I can hardly think of anything else.

It is only later that the thought: How wonderful is the thing I am doing, begins to give place to another: How *difficult* is the thing I do!

Difficult: not the miracle of transsubstantiation, not the offering of the Church's sacrifice to God. This is wonderful, but not difficult. On the contrary, it is extraordinarily easy; almost too easy, I begin to think. God is doing all the work and I am doing practically nothing; he is using me only as his instrument. An honourable task for me, if you will, but not really burdensome. After all, no unworthiness of mine can prevent my Mass from being the true sacrifice of the New Covenant. By his providential dispensation our divine Saviour has ensured that the salutary virtue of his sacraments and the infinite efficacy of his sacrifice shall not be made void through the frailty of his ministers. It is enough for the priest to perform the rite as enjoined, and to intend to act as Christ's minister. — But, I now ask myself, is God

requiring nothing more of me than this? Was it only for this that I went through a long and arduous training in the seminary? Those instructions in the spiritual life, the training in asceticism, in self-control, in habits of virtue, those repeated warnings that the life of the priest is a life of self-denial and abnegation—was all this designed for nothing more than to make me a reverent and not too unworthy offerer of Christ's sacrifice? We all know, of course, that God does ask far more of his priests than this. What he asks of every priest is that he shall be another Christ—*alter Christus*—and another Christ, not as offerer of his sacrifice merely, but as victim of it also. And this is a very difficult thing indeed.

That it is the task of all Christians to co-operate with Christ in bringing to completion the work of saving souls, is something we all know, and Pope Pius XII emphasised it in his Encyclical on the Mystical Body. 'This is truly a tremendous mystery', he wrote, 'upon which we can never meditate enough: that the salvation of many souls depends on the prayers and voluntary mortifications offered for that intention by the members of the mystical body of Jesus Christ, and upon the co-operation which pastors and faithful afford to our divine Saviour.' But this is specially true of us priests. If the members of the Body must be in all things likened to the Head, then we, sealed with the character of his priesthood, have a paramount duty to conform ourselves in every respect to him. We have to work for souls as he worked for them, and in the manner in which he worked for them. How did he save souls? How did he redeem mankind? By offering sacrifice, yes; but by offering a sacrifice of which he was not only the priest but also the victim. The gift he offers to his Father is none other than himself. His life is a continual holocaust by which everything that is in him is burnt up in the consuming fire of self-immolation. To do the will of his Father is his very meat, the food that sustains him. It is for this only that he came, to do the will of the Father who sent him; it is the sole meaning and purpose of his life and mission. And perhaps it is in order to give us a convincing proof of this that he has allowed us a glimpse of that bitter agony in the Garden where his human will appears to us in its utter self-abasement, as though annihilated, in its complete submission to the Father. 'Not my will, but thine be done.' Truly the zeal of his Father's house had eaten him up. The last drop of blood that dripped from his wounded side on the cross was the external sign and proof that

ere was now nothing, absolutely nothing, that was not utterly and wholly given over, surrendered, to his Father for our salvation.

This is the Priest who is our model; this is the Head to whom we must be likened: not merely priest, but victim, of his sacrifice. That Christ should be victim as well as priest of his sacrifice was the price the Father asked for redemption *in actu primo*; and the symmetry of the divine plan surely shows that the price God now asks for the accomplishment of that work *in actu secundo* is that we, priests after the likeness of Christ, shall be victims also, victims completely self-immolated, of the sacrifice we offer in his name. Seen thus, my daily Mass is indeed a difficult thing. The likeness of Christ as priest was stamped indelibly on my soul when the Bishop laid his hands on me in ordination; that likeness came easily, as a necessary effect of the valid sacrament. And it is a likeness nothing can efface. I am a priest for ever; for ever Christ's of offering becomes mine when I pronounce the words of consecration in the Mass. But his victimhood does not come so easily, nor does it remain so indefectibly mine. 'It means entering into a new life', says the Holy Father in *Menti nostrae*, his recent message to the clergy, 'a life which will become radiant with the glories of Thabor only when it has first been sealed with the offerings of our Redeemer on Calvary; and this calls for hard and unremitting toil.'

And now the frail host on the corporal, the precious blood in the chalice, hold a new message. The white host betokens a bloodless body, a sacred body drained of every drop of blood in complete self-surrender to the Father; the chalice of blood speaks of the Man of Sorrows who became obedient to the death of the cross. And the contrast between me and my divine model immediately springs to mind. The disproportion, the lack of balance, becomes shamefully apparent. The priestly power, the power of offering the divine victim, so unfailing and so perfect—perfect as God can make it; and my victimhood, so imperfect, perhaps non-existent. I am so perfectly likened to Christ as priest, because that does not depend on me at all—and so imperfectly likened to him as victim, because that does depend on me and on my co-operation with his grace. Is there any likeness at all between the victim on the corporal, displayed before my eyes in the outward appearance of death, annihilation, self-oblation

and complete submission to the Father, emptied so that we may be filled, become poor so that we may become rich—and myself, self-willed perhaps, lukewarm, easy-going, grudging in the service of my Master, sometimes unfaithful, sometimes even positively rebellious? Can I even begin to say, with that divine victim truly present before me, that my meat is to do the will of the Father; that the zeal of God's house has eaten me up; that my life has no other purpose or meaning but to do God's will? Can I say with any sincerity to God: 'Not my will, but thine be done'?

This, I think, is the significance of his daily Mass so far as the personal life of the priest is concerned. His Mass every morning is a daily reminder of the real aim of his priestly life: he has to ensure, with the help of God's grace, that his life of complete self-devotion shall liken him as perfectly to Christ the victim as the sacramental character of holy order has likened him to Christ the priest.

And does not this give a real meaning to what is called saying Mass with devotion? Seen in this light, devotion is not any merely affective joy we may feel in celebrating the sacred mysteries (this is a divine favour which is God's to give or withhold at will); not that sense of exhilaration which we may, or may not, experience in performing so sublime a function. No, devotion thus becomes literally self-giving, utter and complete self-dedication. To say Mass with devotion means to offer the Holy Sacrifice in the firm purpose and determination that, by God's grace, my life will be as wholly devoted, as unreservedly dedicated, to the work of saving souls as was the life of that divine victim whom I now render present on the altar and offer to God. To say Mass with devotion means to equilibrate, as far as in me lies, my status of victim with my character of priest.

To say Mass with this sort of devotion is indeed a difficult thing. And yet this difficult thing, I am convinced, is asked of us by God. This is why the Ordinal calls the priesthood a burden, a charge: . . . *dignos esse ad huius onus officii*. So understood, the priesthood is truly a load to carry, a load of which there can be no symbol more fitting than the cross Christ bore to Calvary. Is it necessary, this difficult task? Those whose work lies amongst the people know that nothing short of heroism is required to save the world for Christ. In men's hearts today there is a hardness which only the burning and heroic charity of Christ's servants

all melt. And this heroism is demanded above all of his priests. It may be martyrdom, though of this, perhaps, few will be found worthy. But something hardly less heroic, and something less apparent to the eyes of men, is that whole-hearted devotion which holds back nothing, literally nothing, that may serve to win souls for Christ. Each of us has his reservations. It may be a valued friendship, a legitimate self-indulgence, a recreation, a fond ambition, a personal preference for this or that kind of work, an attachment to a particular place, parish, or post—this at least. Are we prepared to give it all up? I wonder whether there is, perhaps, in the secret life of every priest a Gethsemani: a crisis, an agony, a spiritual conflict in which he is called upon to make the supreme sacrifice of that to which he is most passionately attached; a testing time, when the priest has to show whether he is prepared, like the disciples, to leave all things and follow his Master. If he is not found wanting here, he is well on the way to the Calvary which is his goal.

The final triumph of Christ in the world is certain; it will come. But the time of its coming can and must be hastened by us. I feel convinced that it will come sooner or later, in greater measure or less, according as we priests are able and willing to reproduce in ourselves the *kenosis*, the self-emptying, of Christ: complete dedication to the work of saving souls.

The white host: the body drained of blood: our wills drained of self. This, surely, is the lesson of the daily Mass. If the task calls for heroism we are not without God's help to perform it. For in holy order the character brings with it a sacramental grace; and that is the sacramental grace of the priesthood if not a supernatural stimulus to become more perfectly victims of the sacrifice which the character empowers us to offer?

THE SINNER

By BEDE JARRETT, O.P.¹

IF we were truly humble, we should never be astonished to find ourselves giving way to sin. We should indeed be horrified but not surprised. This is one of those things that are so hard, so impossible, to understand. Once we have really begun to try to see what we are like, we recognise ourselves to be the most evil of all creatures. This is no mock humility. At least, we can put it another way round by saying that we know more evil against ourselves than against anyone else. I know others in history or amongst my acquaintances who have done worse things than I, but I cannot say truthfully that they are worse because I do not know. I do not know either their temptations or their conditions of interior life, nor do I know their motives; and until one knows motives one cannot tell whether what was done was sinful or not. The Catholic Church never claims to judge intentions, to judge why people do what they do. She may condemn acts, but never persons in their own consciences: 'All judgment must be left to the Son'. It follows, then, that I know worse against myself than against anyone else. I know that I am a sinner.

I have also every reason for supposing that I shall always be a sinner. At least, my self-knowledge suggests to me that it will be wonderful if I am not. There is nothing that I can think of in myself to assure me of any change in my character to warrant any supposition to the contrary; consequently, I have to keep in view, as far as my own power is concerned, the prospect of sinnership to the very end. To hold this in memory is at least to avoid any disturbing discouragement when I find myself giving way to my old sins. I shall not be surprised at their return, even if I find that for some reason or other I remain free from them for some time. To be surprised because I had kept clear of evil is more reasonable than to be surprised because I had fallen back into habits of sin.

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The value of recognising this seemingly depressing truth is, that it prevents me from falling into the habit of confusing my vanity with an act of contrition. To be distressed because of my sins—especially of returning sins that I thought I had rid myself of—is not contrition, as like as not, but mere hurt vanity. Such an act of sorrow cannot well be supernatural, since God does not draw me into it but myself only. It has not a supernatural motive but a very natural one; it is not in the least a motive of conversion but the beginning of despair. Let me, on the other hand, hold to the conviction that I am a sinner, and at least I shall not be discouraged by my falls; and this is no mean accomplishment. For priests are the most easily discouraged people in the world.

We shall always be sinners: consequently, we must not allow ourselves to lose heart over our sins. But why is sin allowed in the world at all? We do not know, and perhaps never will know till the very end of all, when it will no longer interest us to know the answer. But we do know this, that God allows it. Unless he allowed it, it would not be found here. We know also that God does not will it, because he could not be the perfect holiness he is if he willed it. Yet though it be contrary to his direct will it is not contrary to his permissive will. God allows it, and therefore God has a good motive in allowing it, for God cannot have motives other than good. God allows sin; God allows me to sin. Why? We do not know, but it is something to know that God does allow it and that he has a good motive for so doing. Now the fact that God allows it does not in any way excuse me from the guilt and responsibility of my wrongdoing. These sins are sins, and I know quite well that I deliberately chose evil rather than good. It was a deliberate choice of my will. God's permission does not therefore absolve me, but it does give me reason to think differently of my sin after the event than if it bore no relation to God at all. For it is clear that since he allows sin and since his motive in so doing is a good motive and since his only motive can be love, I am allowed to fall into sin because God loves me. However disconcerting this thought is, undoubtedly it is a valuable one because it makes me realise that something can be done with sin to make it useful to me.

What else can that mean but that God wishes me out of my past sin to come nearer to him, to find somewhere in that unhappy past a motive too for love? Nor is this difficult to find, for

the past seen in this light is not merely full of my failures, it is also full of God's forgiveness—the remembrance of which shall surely be as important to me as the remembrance of my sins. Not only shall it be more important but more too in my thoughts, for thus shall I have more courage with which to meet life.

On this account let me not suppose that I have reason to presume on God's forgiveness. I must not therefore take as my conclusion that it does not matter that I sin for God will forgive me; God will not forgive me if I am not sorry for my sins, and sorrow I cannot have if I take no trouble to avoid sin and merely think of the infinity of God's mercy. But the way it should affect me is this: I should try to make capital out of this past sin by letting it bring me nearer to God. The starting point of this concept must be that there is a divine purpose being achieved by this permissive act of God. We know that he is so powerful that he could have prevented sin. We know that he did not prevent sin. We know therefore that sin must in some way fit into his plan. Let us say, as St Augustine did, that God is so powerful that he can bring good out of evil.

There is a passage in the writings of Juliana of Norwich in which the idea is stated in the terms in which a mystic would see it. She was privileged as it seemed to her to ask God why he should have let sin come; and his answer as she understood it was not a direct answer and yet an answer after all. God set in front of her the fact that by Adam's sin more harm was done than by any other sin, more harm to man and more dishonour to God. Yet the remedy for this was the Incarnation, which was more pleasing to God than the sin of Adam was displeasing; else we should never have been saved. But also the Incarnation brought to man finer and fairer things than sin had brought him hurt and pain: 'Since I have made well the most harm, then is my will that thou know thereby that I shall make well all that is less'. This was to show her, as she thought, that even the sins of men have a place in the economy of God, and that man can, if he so chooses, use them for finding an additional reason for loving and serving God better. Indeed, what else is the act of sorrow but some such act as this? It is the act of a soul that deliberately turns to its own sin, but not merely to its own sin. Sorrow is not merely self-regarding, else it would be no act of religion at all. Religion is looking at God and paying to God what is owed him. What do we owe God when

we have sinned against him? What is sin? It is an act or thought or word or omission against the law of God. Truly so. But it is also against his love. It is an act, not only of disobedience, but also of malice. God therefore asks of us in return by way of recompense not merely that we shall be obedient but that we should love. It is love exactly that we must have in our act of sorrow or else it is not sorrow at all. Love is turning to God. Turning to God means that he is in our thoughts as an aspiration to help us to a deeper and stronger resolution to do better than we have done in the past. Past sin can thus be made to re-assert to us the claims of God on us. This does not justify sin but it can be made the way in which sin so plays into the hands of God.

Indeed, so strong is this idea in the New Testament that our Lord almost seems in a well-known scene to put a premium on love. 'Which of the two loved him most, Simon? The one who had been forgiven a little or the one whose forgiven debt had been the greater of the two?' Surely the answer of Simon is reasonable: 'He to whom most was forgiven has more reason to love most'. It sounds as if our Lord wanted to teach that the converted sinner had more reason for loving God than those who have never done wrong. But this he cannot mean. What is evident is the positive teaching that those who have been forgiven much have much reason for love.

Sorrow then is an act of love. In it the soul looks beyond its own fault to see God at the end of the vista. Sorrow, to be supernatural, must bring in God, and that means that in my act of sorrow I have to think more of God than of myself, give more time to the consideration of him than of myself. That is why our Lord when he meets St Peter after the Passion does not say to him: 'Art thou sorry?' but he asks: 'Lovest thou me?' There is a whole world of difference between these two. Peter was sorry of course. So also was Judas; else he would never have hanged himself. But the sorrow of Judas is a purely human sorrow, the sorrow that is the offspring of hurt vanity. He suddenly woke to the meanness of what he had done and was terribly ashamed. But shame is not sorrow. Shame is a much less inspiring emotion. It leads indeed of its nature to depression as the sequel showed. But love, on the contrary, is inspiring for the simple reason that it takes the soul away from the contemplation of itself—always a depressing sight to those who are honest—and focuses its attention

on another. That is what we mean by love. So the remembrance of past sin can become either of two things: an emotion which is self-regarding and depressing or an emotion that is other-regarding (to wit, God-regarding) and inspiring to further effort. The difference between these two is the whole teaching of Christ. He came to lead men to God and that in every part of their lives. He came to lead them there through everything they did. There must be no exceptions, no bare patches which are exempt from this. Every sin, once over, must be brought under the dedication of the Gospel teaching. Not even evil can be allowed to escape.

Again then we repeat that the priest needs to remember this as much as any one else does. Perhaps he needs it more than any one else. It is our experience surely, if we have had to deal with the unhappy cases of those priests who have fallen away (or perhaps we have had the more distressing sight to have to watch one gradually fall), that in more cases than not they have fallen away because they have despaired of recovery, because they have thought some habit of sin to which they had fallen victim was too compelling a bond. Afterwards they have invented other explanations, such as difficulties against faith, etc. But at base we know that it is the firm hold on them that sin had obtained that really frightened them and made them lose hope. How much safer to be sure that one will be a sinner to the end, that all we are asked to do is to realise this and continue our struggle; because the real point is that God can set our troubles right. We have perpetually to be turning to him for assistance, because we know that it is his will that we should be saved. As long as we are not resigned to sin so as to make no efforts against it, we are in the right condition to escape from it. Priests fail for one of two reasons, either discouragement or disdain, and both are the children of vanity or pride. Now once you are convinced that you are a sinner, you are proof against discouragement for you are already sure that you will never do very much, or at least will be surprised at any success that comes your way and will attribute it to the right source—not man but God. Any success that attends your efforts is not so customary that it is accepted as a habit; rather it is acknowledged to be a gift of God. Hence, that we overcome any fault and continue to overcome it never sets up the impression that now we are free of it, but only that God is most kind in giving permanency of a kind to the feeble efforts of our will. Hence always there is

complete acceptance of the idea that God is the giver of all good things, that good things come from no one but him.

We are left then to look back on our past with deep thankfulness for all the mercies that have been shown us, and should endeavour to show our gratitude in return by further efforts to bring ourselves into line with his will. It does not do to be thinking of ourselves unless we are also thinking of God; not the misery of man so much as the mercy of God should engross our attention. Sin, then, can be used afterwards so as to make the memory of an inspiration towards a greater love of God. This is also the final act of sorrows, the perfect contrition that thinks of sin and is sorry for it because it has offended God who is infinitely good in himself. Here is true sorrow in which self is forgotten and God only remembered. It is not sorrow only, but sweet sorrow: it is love.

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MARTYR OF CHARITY

By DONALD NICHOLL

IN September 1931, a young priest entered the Carmelite Monastery at Lille, which is under the patronage of the Little Flower. It was a month of stirring events in the world of high finance and politics, for the question of the gold standard was throwing the money-markets into confusion and unemployment was kindling the flames of class-hatred. The British Association was in session at the time, listening amongst other things to a broad-sweeping address from General Smuts, an address in which he painted his holistic Deity on a canvas large enough even for the views of his audience. To the thousands who began their day on a diet of bacon and egg and *The Times*, it must have seemed that Wall Street and General Smuts were dealing with the vital issues of the moment; and if, by some chance, they had come to hear of the young priest's joining the Carmelites they would have dubbed it 'escapism'. But it was not fear which inspired the young priest as he began the Introit for the day, the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, *Nos autem gloriari oportet in Cruce Domini nostri Jesu Christi . . .*; his heart was overflowing with love for Christ and his Cross and the slow tread of the Calvary-Mass sounded more clearly in his ears than all the ticker-tape in creation.

Fourteen years later, on the 2nd June, 1945, the columns of *The Times* were still full of the same urgent concerns as in 1931, the war in Indo-China, the onslaught upon Japan and, above all, the momentous decisions which the United Nations were taking at San Francisco. The young priest might have received the news of the day with a twinkle in his deep-set eyes if only he had known of it, but he was now too close to death for the noise of the world to reach him. He was dying, so far-spent that he could not join with Holy Mother Church as she moved into the Gradual for the day, *Juxta est Dominus his qui tribulati sunt corde: et humile spiritu salvabit*. The Church was claiming one of her noblest sons as he completed that Exaltation of the Holy Cross which he had begun so many years ago. It was at Linz in Austria; Père Jacques would see his native Normandy no more.

The story of this 'modern Jesus', as one of his acquaintances does not hesitate to describe him, is beautifully told by P. Philippe de la Trinité, O.C.D. in his *Père Jacques, Martyr de la Charité*.¹ The book is beautiful because its subject is beautiful, and because the author has had the rare good sense to allow the every-day folk who felt Père Jacques's radiance to tell of his love; they do so simply, without affectation, and so they produce an account of sanctity which through its plain, matter-of-fact evidence is reminiscent of the Gospels themselves. No short article could hope to present the hero of this book with anything like the fulness he deserves, because he was such a many-sided person, a Carmelite monk but also a social reformer, an educationist, a leader of men and a lover of human things, of children, of good writing, of the most modern art. Yet there may be value in such an article in that it shows that the 'Little Way' leads to Calvary, and if it provides a glimpse of this rough-hewn and impetuous foot-soldier of Christ as he slogged away through the Nazi concentration camps, every step a further torture, every moment a fresh offering to the heavenly Father.

A few dates may help to provide the framework for what are bound to be scattered observations. Père Jacques was born at Breteuil (Seine Inférieure) on 29th January, 1900; his parents were working-class folk who made considerable sacrifices to send him to the Seminary at Rouen, where he studied from 1912 until 1924, with a break from 1920-1922 for military service. Ordained priest in 1925, he taught at Saint-Joseph, Le Havre, until 1931, when he became a Carmelite. After making his final vows in 1935 he became the founder and director of the novel Carmelite experiment, the College of St Thérèse de Lisieux at Avon. His period at Avon was brought to an end in January 1944, when the Gestapo arrested him for sheltering young Jews and for his part in the Resistance Movement. The Gestapo took him to the prison at Fontainebleau and then to the camp at Compiègne; in March of 1944 he was bundled into trucks with other first-rank enemies of Nazidom (almost all of them communists) and transferred to Sarrebruck, where for a month he was subjected along with his comrades to the most ghastly treatment the unhinged S.S. minds could devise. It is difficult to understand how Père Jacques and one or two others managed to survive Sarrebruck, but survive

they did, and towards the end of April he was sent to Mauthausen. The year at Mauthausen represents the consummation of Père Jacques's sacrifice, for the American liberation came too late to save his health (May 1945), and a month later he was dead. Shortly before his release he had written the following words upon an odd scrap of paper, *Per crucem ad lucem. Sine sanguine non fit redemptio—qui facit veritatem venit ad lucem*; every moment of his life is a commentary upon this text, and it is in the light of these words and in the light of the cross which they signify that the subsequent paragraphs need to be read.

It is the paradox of Père Jacques's life, the inherent paradox of Christianity, that he chose obscurity yet became a witness to the light, that he learnt strength and asceticism from a little Norman girl who knew nothing about the great world outside her cloister, and that this same asceticism enabled him to retain his dignity as a human being, whilst men who had been toughened by the ruthless twentieth century snapped like rotten sticks under the horrors of the Nazi camps. For there can be no doubt that the secret of his endurance is to be found in those hidden years when the statesmen were trying to master each other and he was mastering himself. Mastering oneself is never an easy task, and it was more than usually difficult for someone so violent, and even pig-headed, as Père Jacques. This is the very reason why his life is such an inspiration, that the reader can find almost all of his own faults reflected in Père Jacques. Here are some of the comments which have been made upon him by those who knew him during his adolescence in the seminary at Rouen: 'He was strong-willed to the point of fierceness. . . . he was endowed with rich natural gifts, but long and painful struggles must have been necessary before he could master the defects of his disposition, his pride and his obstinacy'. 'During the vacations his wild curiosity did not jibe at any kind of reading—in those days he was no more worried about the Church's index than about his master's advice.' Twenty years later he was still wrestling with the same ardent disposition, and it is obvious from Père Bruno's account of the college at Avon that life could be distinctly uncomfortable when it was lived in proximity to Père Jacques. For example, a pious young boy came up to him one day and said, 'Père Jacques, I made my communion for you today', to be met with the reply, 'Off with you! I don't need your communions.' In many respects he reminds one of Fr Vincent

McNabb: the same shudder which goes through many Englishmen at the memory of Fr Vincent kissing an Anglican Bishop's feet was experienced by the good Carmelites when their dear brother used to pour out his generous soul to them, when he used to prostrate himself after having 'put his foot in it again'. For other men it would have been extravagance, but extraordinary virtues require extraordinary discipline and his was no ordinary virtue.

The extraordinary discipline in his case was the 'Little Way' of St Teresa. His life-long devotion to her finds a parallel only in her life-long devotion to him, for the inspiration and protection which St Teresa afforded him are just as clearly written in this book as the date of his birth or of his death. His humility in face of the Little Flower is vividly illustrated in his correspondence with Mother Agnes of Jesus, sister of St Teresa and Prioress of the Neuf Carmel. On several occasions he asked for relics of the saint, he took pilgrimages to Lisieux and, above all, he asked her to teach him the secret of becoming a living flame of love for God. To Mother Agnes he wrote, 'Would you be so kind as to ask your holy little sister to allow me an ever-deepening appreciation and understanding of her teaching? It is a rich mine of instruction and counsels which reveal the very heart of Christianity.' He lived under her patronage in the Carmel at Lille, and in the college at Avon, so that it almost became second nature for him to ask her aid, and he began each day as she did by offering himself as a holocaust for the divine love. A striking instance of his straightforward, almost casual, awareness of her protection occurred when he was coming into Mauthausen. He said, 'Saint Teresa the Child Jesus, I am now coming into this camp and I leave the kind of reception I get entirely to you, but I should be very pleased to receive some sign that you are being received into this camp and that you are protecting me'. Scarcely had he entered the camp than he was greeted by a zealous Catholic, M. Henri Bousset, who introduced him to the Catholics of the place and outlined their needs. Père Jacques and the Little Flower were united in Christ for the journey towards the last Station.

The point about this last Station is that there are thirteen other Stations before it; Père Jacques never shirked any of them. He loved each one of them, he loved the Cross, he loved life and he married himself with death, but the years were long years and it

was all foot-slogging; he put one foot in front of the other knowing that the sweat would end only with death itself. Perhaps that is why the Little Way appealed to his profoundly sceptical nature; you can't 'kid' yourself about the Little Way. You may deceive yourself into believing that you are at the summit of Mount Carmel if you can read St John of the Cross in the original, if you are thrilled by the beauty of '*Llama de amor viva*', but it is the job straight in front of your nose that St Teresa tells you to get on with, and very often there is no thrill in it. In 1928, for example, before he became a Carmelite, Père Jacques used to run a troop of scouts, who wanted to go to England for their camping holiday but had nothing like sufficient funds. The young priest, who was a great student, had laboriously scraped together a sizeable library; he sold the entire library so that his boys could go to England. There is something direct, manly, and defying cynicism, in such an action; it puts us to shame when we remember the ease with which we sign petitions in favour of food, clothes or books for refugees without being prepared for either hunger or cold or empty book-shelves. But that was typical of Père Jacques, who knew no more about sanctity-formulae than anyone else, whose only distinction was that he tried them, and in full measure. He did without sleep, he used to stand upright whilst he was marking his pupils' papers or else he used to kneel down; either position satisfied him so long as it was uncomfortable; he did without food, he did without warmth. This was just the beginning, of course, since what he was really trying to give up was his own will, but, fortunately, he had never adopted that modern notion that the will is the first thing that can be given up and that the rest can be left to look after itself. This modern notion is flight and Père Jacques was no aviator—he was an infantry man. Consequently, when it came to the concentration camps, where so many men found themselves defenceless, he still held that weapon which he had cherished on the long march, his own cross. One of his companions at Mauthausen, M. de Bonard, recounts how the Carmelite trained his weaker brethren in the use of this weapon. M. de Bonard told Père Jacques that under the weight of his suffering he had promised to God that if he were delivered from his present torments he would go to Lourdes, that he would even make his communion twice a week for the rest of his life. There was a long pause before the priest replied, 'No. You mustn't

empt God. The greatest proof you can offer of your confidence God is to accept his will now, whatever it may be.'

Clearly there is no space here for a detailed account of this holy man's life in the concentration camps, of the daily sacrifice of food and clothing to those who needed them perhaps more, of the dramatic moments of a clandestine Mass; or of that general absolution spoken through a window to six hundred dying men of all nationalities who stumbled through the *Confiteor* each in his own language. It requires all the 150 pages which P. Philippe devotes to this period in order to give the least impression of its heroic quality, and one has to be content with P. Riquet's summing-up, 'At Mauthausen, as at Compiègne, Père Jacques was undeniably the most radiant, the most loved, the most evangelical of all the witnesses to Christ'. Yet the impact of Père Jacques' forceful personality was both felt and welcomed by the set of men in particular who seem to receive little love from Catholics these days — the communists. Nothing would pain him more, were he alive, than the way in which Catholics and communists who fought side by side against the tyranny of Nazism have fallen into the bitterest enmity towards each other; therefore it may be regarded as a work of piety to single out his relations with communists.

One feature which Père Jacques fully shared with his communist friends was a hatred of everything bourgeois. Such a statement has to be interpreted, of course, in the sense that bourgeois signifies a type of human behaviour and not an economic class, for Père Jacques hated mediocrity and flabbiness and lip-service no matter what the economic status of the perpetrator. In other words, he was enough of a Christian to shock the bourgeois, and shock them he certainly did. During the early years of his priesthood he preached a sermon on money which led the mealy-mouthed in the congregation to exclaim, 'He talks just like a communist', and to request that he should never be allowed to preach in their parish again. On another occasion he raised a similar storm by a sermon which began, 'I am a worker, the son of a worker; I am here to talk about Christ the worker'; living with a saint was a perpetual strain on their consciences; they would have preferred someone nice and respectable. Perhaps Père Jacques had such people in mind when he referred to those *qui se servent du bon Dieu comme on se sert de bonbons sucrés*.

Even shocking the bourgeois, however, was a waste of time when he could be busied in loving the communists, and from P. Philippe we get a charming glimpse of the good priest's relations with two communists who were his army-comrades during the winter of the 'phoney' war. These two used to harangue Père Jacques for hours on end with speeches about the messianic age to come, and the gay Carmelite would go so far with them that he seemed to be on their side, then suddenly he would point out that what they were really thirsting for was the love of God. He found more love of God in these restless souls than in many of the *bien-pensants*. But they were not to be converted; they just exclaimed despairingly, 'What a waste! he's just the kind of man that we could do with'. One of them, indeed, became so friendly that he appointed himself Père Jacques's right-hand man in preparing a room for Midnight Mass and the Christmas celebrations; he was proud to have made the place fit for the great feast, he wished everyone a 'Happy Christmas'. A little longer and he would have been serving Mass.

The circumstances in which Père Jacques renewed his acquaintances with communists were less idyllic, but the impression which he produced upon them through his burning love for souls was even greater. It was during the course of his famous conferences at Compiègne in 1944 when he obtained permission to give instruction on the catechism to any one who cared to listen. The conferences took place in the camp chapel at 10 o'clock at night, and by half-past nine there was not a place vacant in the whole room; the most faithful attenders were the communists, who listened silently and admiringly as this great apostle of the truth expounded Catholic teaching upon every subject under the sun, from the social teaching of the Church to the preciousness of virginity. The brilliant success of Père Jacques in Compiègne was sufficient to endear him to the communists, who would have gladly risked their own lives for his sake, but even now he had not fully revealed to them his pure love of mankind—he was to go with them through the furnace of Sarrebruck.

Sarrebruck defies description. That even the toughest men were broken on its wheel of suffering need occasion no surprise; that some should have survived it is sufficient to make them objects of our admiration; but that anyone in the midst of the blows and torture, the starvation and cold, should have still retained a

bought for any skin but his own. . . . this would be incredible unless God had been shaping him for it since the beginning of his life. Such a man was this martyr of charity. There was an 'infirmary' in the camp where some fifty living skeletons were dragging out their last hours in the stench of dysentery; covered with vermin and abandoned by all, they can have hoped for nothing better than to follow their fellows whom the S.S. used to drown in a pond at the centre of the camp. When Père Jacques saw them he saw Christ; he stuck out his obstinate head and took all the blows that were coming to him for insisting upon helping these wretched men; his tenacity gained him admiration even from the brutal commandant, Hornetz, who gave him the added job of looking after the 'infirmary'. Every day he swilled the room; he washed the sick men with his own hands, he washed shirts and mended them up for bandages, he even scraped up the S.S. men's droppings from their plates in order to afford some extra nourishment for his charges. What warmth he brought into those chilled souls through his fervent love of God will only be known on the Last Day. The person who assisted him in this work was a good communist comrade, Nicolot. It would be well for contemporary Catholics to meditate upon that camp in Sarrebruck during April 1944, when the Carmelite and his comrade of the Left spent their days tending the wounds of Christ.

No one who had witnessed Père Jacques's utter abandonment of himself at Sarrebruck would have refused him entry into their hearts, and the communists henceforward were to treat him as one of their own. They had scarcely set foot inside Mauthausen before room was made for him on the small committee of the French *résistance*, and for the rest of his time there he worked in the closest collaboration with the communist leaders. His behaviour did not go uncriticised, of course, and some of the Polish Catholics raised against him a cry which he had already heard in his home diocese long years ago, 'He is a communist'. The answer that one had been given by his Master two thousand years before, and it was his Master whom he echoed when he replied, 'The preaching of the Gospel is not for those who are of the household but for those who have to be brought in.' That Père Jacques, if he had lived, would have brought many of them in can scarcely be doubted; he had won their hearts, they elected him president of the camp's French committee when the American

forces liberated them, and he joyously promised to make them the subject of his first sermons at Notre-Dame if he were allowed to do so by his superiors. But Père Jacques did not live; his great mentor, the Little Flower, had said that in the evening of life the only thing that counts is love, and he himself had shown that great love is the way to bring evening upon one's life. It would be his dying prayer that we might love the communists with all our hearts.

When all this has been said, however, there remain many facets of his personality which have gone unmentioned: his enthusiasm for Pascal, for Rimbaud and Baudelaire, his intellectualism, the energy which he threw into sport and, above all, the fine discipline which he inspired in his pupils at Avon. But we must mention at least one question to which his life gives the answer and which has been engaging much attention since the publication of Père Perrin's 'Priest-Workman'; that is, should a priest become a workman? does he need to go to the bench or to the foundry before he can be an effective priest? Père Jacques wrote the answer with his blood; he showed that a priest, as such, is a workman in the human spirit; he both summed up the work of his peasant forefathers and pointed to the destiny of future priests when he said, 'That's my job—suffering'.



*O Sacerdos, quis es tu?
Non es a te, quia de nihilo
Non es ad te, quia mediator hominum
Non es tibi, quia sponsus Ecclesiae
Non es tui, quia servus omnium
Non es tu, quia Deus es
Quis ergo es tu? Nihil et omnia.*

—St Norbert.

THE MOTHER OF THE PRIEST

By CONRAD PEPLER, O.P.

OUR LORD, remembering the family occasions in his home town, once remarked on the joy of a mother who has just brought a child into the world. The joy is not merely the negative one of relief from pain; it is, he implies, a human joy because she knows that a human child now has existence apart from her own and yet so close-tied to her own existence that his very blood is hers. Our Lord, thinking of that, must have thought too of the reciprocal joy of the son belonging to his mother, a separate being and yet the same blood—and more than that, the same mind and the same words, as his bringing forth continues to his maturity. The son belongs to his mother all those years she, even more than his father, inspires his imagination with homely pictures and places on his lips homely words, the first being those of 'Father' and 'Mother'. The countryside round Nazareth is seen reflected in our Lord's imagination as he unfolds one parable after another to his wondering audience. And those pictures and habits of thought were given him by Mary, pointing out the significant events of the seasons, the sowing and the reaping, the thrill of the vintage—by these scenes the imagination of her child was developed as he grew in grace and wisdom before God and man.

So it is that the boy or the young man, destined by God to become his minister among men, is reared in the joy of life stemming principally from his mother. Perhaps it is almost too reckoned a notion to insist on the importance of the home formation of future vocations; but it could not pass unnoticed in looking at the priest. For the priest carries the stamp of his mother more than of any other member of his family. Grace can supplement the deficiencies of nature, but in the natural order of things the home setting of one who is to feed Christ's family lays the foundation of a sound 'vocation'. Unhappy homes mar even the lives of the children in lay life; so much the more in the life of the priest. But a happy home provides all that nature needs to support a man in a life supernaturally dedicated to the 'edification of the building-up—of the body of Christ'.

The priest first of all is identified with his family in a special way because he is identified with his mother. She it was who formed his flesh and blood, his bones and sinews; she it was who nurtured him with her own substance, who fed his mind and will, who taught him the love and respect that she herself felt for his father and her devotion to his brothers and sisters. She taught her son to make the sign of the cross and to stammer the *Our Father*; she taught him to salute his heavenly Mother and to turn to her in his adolescent difficulties as the final stages of the bringing forth of the man are completed.

But then the hand of the Lord is placed on this child of promise, and the Son says even that he must be prepared to 'hate' his father and mother, sisters and brothers. The moment of final weaning has come, and the young man who still lives his mother's life and is still anchored to the hearth, must cut himself adrift from this natural surrounding. And the one who suffers most is his mother who is losing part of herself; the pain of bringing forth the child is upon her once more. Now, however, the greater joy soon begins to flood her soul. Her son never in fact leaves her, for even thousands of miles away in missionary lands he remains the son of his mother. But more than that—the mother by nature has for these years been introducing the son of her flesh to his Mother by grace; and she knows that the 'exodus' from the family hearth is only a flight to the promised land of the family of God under the protection of the Mother of God. The young man has all this time been drawn deeper into the 'household of the faith' as in her domesticity the mother has nurtured him among the *domestici Dei*. There is no real severance, then, as her flesh and blood leaves the apron strings of one mother for the mantle of the other; and her joy is even fuller as she sees her man child brought more wholly and entirely into the world.

★ ★ ★

Mary, the blessed Virgin, has never been given a priestly title, except by the extravagant. Indeed, Rome has forbidden the use of such terms for the Queen of Heaven. This may seem strange to those outside the household of the faith who think that Mary's children use superlative terms in her regard without much respect to sense, still less to theology. But in fact the Mother of the High-Priest does not herself exercise the functions of a priest; for she is too closely associated with his priestly character and work to bear

herself any distinct title. In these days, when the Holy Office has forbidden the use of the word 'Priest' for the blessed Virgin, an ever-increasing realisation of her co-operation with her Son has revealed her as essential to his priestly work. The Mother of Jesus was there not only to inspire the changing of water into wine, but also to assist at the priestly sacrifice. All through those years of her own family life she had been preparing the priest and the victim for the altar of sacrifice. She had nurtured the priest from the first FIAT which compassed his priestly FIAT of offering in the garden. The sword of sacrifice had begun already to pierce her heart in the Temple when she took her Son and offered her turtle-doves. And then she had prepared the body of the victim, flesh of her flesh, blood of her blood; she had nourished him with food and clothed him with vestments of her own making, the 'coat without seam' at the foot of Calvary. All this time the Mother knew that the perfect human being she was bringing into the world, that he might redeem it, was to suffer as the sorrowing servant, the worm and no man.

The priest, then, when he steps on to the altar for the first time, has already been fully introduced into Mary's family, for the Mother of Jesus the High-Priest is Mother of him who acts in the person of Jesus offering the same sacrifice. And as he utters the words of consecration and Calvary is made present once more the Mother of Jesus stands there at the side of the priest, the fellow-redeemer and the fellow-sufferer with the High-Priest through whom all honour and glory is now offered to the Father. Mother of the priest, indeed, Mary protects with her mantle those whom the Father has chosen to act in the person of the Son; and she continues the work of the mother at home round the hearth, teaching him to love the blessed Trinity who has committed to her all the motherly qualities of the Godhead, and to love also all her other children throughout the family of mankind.

For Mary sets before the priest the family ideal, ennobled and broadened, but stemming from the priest's home. She sets before him the ideal of chastity which is not merely the negative one of leaving behind for ever the possibility of children of his own flesh. The Mother of God had herself vowed virginity that seemed to cut her off from the domestic happiness and hopes of her relatives and friends. But it was a vow that led to her becoming the Mother of the Word—her virginal purity being so utterly

receptive that the bearing and the keeping of the Word was completely concrete. Such maternal chastity in its now divine power and vigour was not even compassed by this infinitude within her womb. Her receptivity became the unique motherhood of the world—having denied herself the joys of family she was given the joys of bringing *the* Man into the world and then of being made the Mother of the World. And as the priest utters those sacred and simple words of nourishment—eating and drinking—he may hear the Son from the Cross saying to the priest himself as to John—‘Son, behold thy Mother’.

The priest then has gone forth from his home, has left his mother and her domestic nurturing behind, has vowed himself with chastity to forego the joys of his own local family. But his new Mother with her chastity sees to it that he takes no sterile stand by flight from family. She gives him the fecundity of her motherhood. People call him ‘Father’ because she, the Mother, has introduced him into her great family, the ‘domestics of God’. He is given by chastity to all. Every man and woman is a child of God and is his child. Every man and woman is a child of Mary, and the priest is there in the person of her Son, her first-born and home-nurtured son. The Mother of the priest is the Mother of Jesus.

REVIEWS

MISSION TO THE POOREST. By M. R. Loew, O.P. (Sheed and Ward; 7s. 6d.)

This is the sort of book that makes one thoroughly ashamed of oneself. If only for that reason, it should be read by every Christian, and, in particular, by every Christian priest. Criticisms there may be, though one hesitates to make them about a man like Père Loew and his work among the dockers of Marseilles. It is so easy, too easy, to sit back comfortably with *Mission to the Poorest* propped up before one, and pick holes in the enthusiastic methods of this group of men on fire with the charity which the grace of the gospel has kindled within them. What man, and especially what priest or Christian, could remain deaf to the sighs that rise from the depths and call for justice and a spirit of brotherly collaboration in a world ruled by a just God? Such deafness would be culpable and unjustifiable before God. While we must beolute in our fight against error, we must also be full of sympathy for those who err, and open-minded in our understanding of their aspirations, hopes and motives.

I have been told, or maybe have read somewhere, that Cardinal Hard said to his young priests that he was concerned less with their possible mistakes, their errors of judgment, than with their zeal. 'Get a move on', he told them in effect; 'I don't care *what* you do, but *do* something to spread the truth of Christ. If you go too far, or stray from what is prudent, I will tell you where you are wrong. Meanwhile make full use of the graces you received at ordination.'

What the Abbé Godin did for the 'Mission de Paris', the Abbé Michonneau for the parish of Colombes, has been done, *mutatis mutandis*, by Père Loew in Marseilles. The story of his work, so ably translated by Pamela Carswell, and framed by an introduction and dialogue by Maisie Ward, is the old one of the Grasshopper and the ant. . . . but with a difference. The ant worth his salt must be ready, when occasion demands, to become a grasshopper among grasshoppers.

D.S.

VESSEL OF CLAY. By Leo Trese. (Sheed and Ward; 7s. 6d.)

Few things are more difficult than to preach to one's fellow-priests. Trese has adopted the device of preaching to himself and letting us overhear him. He sets down in a diary his reflections on the priestly life. The time covered is one day, from 6.30 a.m. to 11.45 p.m.; and the place is America. If this is a typical day, then it is no wonder that American priests die young. The diary is plainly artificial, but if the reader can accept the convention, he will derive much profit from Fr

Trese's meditations. He deals many a shrewd blow at clerical weaknesses, though his ascetical practices do not sit very easily on him. (At his time of life he ought to know, without debate, whether an afternoon rest is a necessity or an indulgence.) Moreover, his book seems to derive from the pre-liturgical age. Liturgy is not an optional extra in the same class as confraternities and guilds.

However, the framework is artificial, as we have said, and perhaps these are not Fr Trese's real habits or opinions at all. Incidentally, it must be a very long time since the genuine spiritual diary of a priest was published. We are remarkably reticent, perhaps wisely.

The cost of the book is too high, the dust-cover is attractive, the 'blurb' bloated. J.D.C.

MYSTERY MAN. By Aloysius Roche. (Burns Oates; 10s. 6d.)

The main criticism of this book is that it is entirely negative. It is written in the racy, spicy style of a gossip column of a Sunday newspaper. You read of the kind of family a priest normally comes from, the boy he probably was, the studies he did, the clothes he wears, the money he has, the number of visits attending the dying may entail, but you will read nothing of the ideal of the Catholic priesthood, nothing of the mystery of the 'Mystery Man'. A non-Catholic reader would draw the legitimate conclusion that the Catholic priest is no more than the Catholic version of the Jewish priest or Protestant minister—there is nothing to show that the Catholic priesthood is specifically unique.

Irritating phrases abound: 'The Church introduced celibacy under pressure of what she conceived to be the common or greater good' (p. 118). 'The parochial clergy may not attain to any very elevated degree of contemplative prayer, but the kind of life they are required to lead would seem to justify the presumption that they are not called to such heights' (p. 141)—and the peculiar justification of that statement, 'difficulties might arise if there were. . . any general addiction to visions, transports or ecstasies' (ibid). 'When priests become sceptics or rationalists. . . ' (p. 176).

There are a lot of gossip anecdotes in this very belittling book on the Catholic Priest, the *raison d'être* of which one cannot fathom.

TERENCE TANNER.

APOLOGETICS FOR THE PULPIT. By Aloysius Roche. (Burns Oates; 18s.)

This work was published shortly before the war, in three volumes, and it is an indication of its usefulness that the publishers should have decided to reprint it in an omnibus edition. There are no changes from the earlier edition. There are three sections, each of forty chapters. The first is called 'The Grounds of Belief,' and discusses the existence of God, sin and redemption, revelation, our Lord, and the Blessed

nity; the second section is concerned with the Church, the third with the sacraments. The book was intended by the author, himself a parish priest, to help the clergy in the preparation of instructions; but the clear, readable exposition makes it a book which can be recommended to the laity also.

A.R.

SEVEN SWORDS. By Gerald Vann, O.P. (Collins; 5s.)

This book is based on a series of Lenten sermons, and consists of an introductory chapter and seven meditations on the Sorrows of our Lord. The author is at his best. The book can be warmly recommended for Lenten reading, but it will be kept and pondered upon by those who have it, because of its lucid and warm treatment of spiritual principles.

A.R.

THE HIGH GREEN HILL. By Gerald Vann, O.P. (Collins; 7s. 6d.)

The High Green Hill is composed of a series of addresses and essays. The author tells us that no single theme or thread of thought runs through the book. It is simply a collection of independent papers. Nevertheless, it does possess a certain unity, since all the essays deal with many aspects of the Christian life. Its fifteen chapters are simple, interesting and instructive.

To many of us, the august mystery of the Trinity seems to be somewhat abstract. Consequently, it is never applied to our lives. However, Gerald Vann with exceptional ability overcomes this difficulty. He treats the 'Fatherhood of God', the 'Friendship of the Son' and the 'dwelling of the Holy Ghost', and deals with them in such a way as to encourage timid souls. The practical importance of the Trinity is shown clearly. To quote the author's words: 'It shows us—a thing we could otherwise never know—what man's total response to God is meant to be, and how, in the totality of that response, man himself is made whole'.

'Confession and Health of Soul' is another chapter worthy of mention. Penance restores life to the soul. Yet some of the effects of our sins remain, and the full restoration of health may have to be gradual. In that work of restoration the grace of the Sacrament is intended to give us strength and courage. The author shows us another and wider conception of Penance. 'It is medicinal to the life of the Church as a whole. We retard the Church's work by our sins; we can help it on by the use of the Sacrament.' In short, the practice of confession is described in a way to attract the neglectful. Here, then, the reader will find many valuable ideas, as old as Christianity itself, but presented with vigour and punch very suited to the needs of the times in which we live.

PATRICK J. O'MAHONY.

EXTRACTS

NEW LIFE (July-August, 1950) has shown a deep perception of the needs of the day in making Cardinal Suhard's pastoral on the priesthood available in English under the title *The Priest in the Modern World*. The Cardinal realised that the world or the 'City' in which we live is in the making, and can be either the City of God or the City of Satan; and it is the priest's duty to work in unison with the priesthood of Christ to secure it for the former. For this very reason there will be tension and conflict in his life, for he is 'the man of God but a man among men'. He must incarnate the divine and the eternal in human ways. To preach integrally, the Word of God must be born again in his soul; he must be the 'Sacrament of Christ' in his life of poverty, chastity and obedience. So the priest will be an enigma, a 'sign of contradiction among men'. He is so like the rest of men, inevitably so involved and interested in all things human; yet he is apart and different. So simple, yet so inscrutable, adaptable, yet unchanging—the friend of all, yet given to none. All the paradoxes of the Gospel somehow come to life in him.

The priest stands for the truth that the world 'can only become fully the City of Men by becoming the City of God'. Owing to his training, he may grow up with too keen a sense of his separateness from the general run of men. He is rightly conscious of being a 'man of God', but 'he is a man of God so as to become the man of men'. He must bridge the abyss between 'the Church and the City of Men'. The feeling will often assail the priest that he exists for the chosen few—the *pusillus grex* who will consent to receive his ministrations; that the larger world outside the Church is no more than an incongruous frame within which he must continue in his lonely task. But this outer world exists to be ultimately incorporated in the Church; and this raises practical problems:

The task confronting the present generation of priests and those who come after them will be one of thinking and planning and loving in terms of the entire world, while with humble submission accepting reality with all its obstinate conservatism and inevitable flaws. The presence of the Church in the world of tomorrow very largely depends on the clearheadedness, prudence and breadth of mind with which this is done.

It would be impossible to exaggerate the importance of these words. To think and to plan as Christians calls for a mind purified and strengthened by Charity. 'Clearheadedness, prudence and breadth of mind' are qualities for which a price must be paid. 'Clearheadedness' calls for hard intellectual labour, 'prudence' for moral discipline

depth of mind' for the humble tolerance which goes with charity. The talk of the salvation of souls: we mean the 'salvation of men', for 'souls inhabit men of flesh and blood'. The Church in her task of 'restoring all things in Christ' is called upon 'to baptise not only the whole of mankind but the whole of man and everything through him'. Towards the end of the letter the Cardinal treats of the spiritual life: 'the first condition of being a priest is to understand it. . . . Priestly activity is first of all a matter of spirituality'. And the established practices can never be neglected:

'prayer, spiritual reading, days of recollection, retreats, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, the Rosary, Examination of Conscience, regular Confession, a well-said Office, Mass celebrated carefully and with deep recollection; these are spiritual values no priest can neglect, much less despise, without an imprudence whose consequences would become gravely culpable.'

'the priest's spiritual life must find expression in his moral character, here he must give an example of a full humanity;

'if he wants the faithful to imitate him in an age made sceptical by the abuse of propaganda, he will have to shine forth first of all by his own example, and supernatural virtues. But these, if they are not to seem strange or despicable, in an age that calculates and compares, will have to rest more than ever before on genuine natural virtues, supernaturally practised. Reception of the priesthood dispenses neither from loyalty nor courage nor broadmindedness, nor a sharp sense of justice. Without these qualities the priest will never touch what is best in man and in contemporary humanism, and he should not be surprised if he does not.'

'the virtues here selected for our notice are those which come from contact with common realities; they are not pre-eminently the virtues of a man wholly withdrawn from the world!

An equally realistic word follows, touching the culture which should mark the priest out from among his fellow men. If the priest is to be a 'teacher of the Word' . . . 'he must acquire a culture which enables him to see the world, and men, and things from God's angle.' In other words his culture must be basically theological: basically but not exclusively so, for, as Pope Pius XI says in his Encyclical on the priesthood:

'They must actually attain a higher standard of general education and learning. It must be broader and more complete, and it must correspond to the generally higher level and wider scope of modern education as compared with the past.'

And we may conclude this meditation on the Cardinal's great letter with words of his own:

'The priesthood was founded by *Love*, it is *Love* itself. . . . The priest has left all, abandoned all. . . . one good he wants for himself. . . . in this human world he has chosen *Love*. . . . He wants it for his brethren. . . . become now his only concern. . . . with it as a lever he can raise the World.'

And Love, be it said, is one of God's secret Names.

ACTION AND CONTEMPLATION, the time-honoured problem, is taken up once again in the Belgian counterpart of LIFE OF THE SPIRIT—*Tijdschrift voor Geestelijk Leven* (Louvain: January 1950).

The relation between action and contemplation, between external and internal activity, constitutes one of the basic problems of the whole of human life, and leaves its impress on the entire civilisation. Our entire human culture will be fundamentally determined by our solution of this problem.

A wrong conception of the relation between the two is in fact the cause of the half-hearted Christianity of today. The Church has never wavered—contemplation takes precedence over action, and action is good only in so far as it ministers to and arises from contemplation. But today, on the contrary, people will say that contemplation is useless, while they lay the emphasis on what is achieved and visible results.

In this atmosphere of economic, industrial and technical efficiency, . . . spiritual withdrawal and interior surrender to the divine workings, have been forced more and more to wither away.

This disease has affected religious as well as lay life. Religion is essentially a means of union with God; and it is accomplished only in an atmosphere of prayer and recollection. But, in the modern atmosphere of efficiency, the religious is like a tropical plant transplanted to a hard climate. Now all prayer is directed to living rightly, whereas before, all right living was directed to prayer.

NOUVELLE REVUE THEOLOGIQUE (Louvain: February) translates the Pope's discourse to the Congress of Religious—8th December, 1950—and Père Carpentier comments on the pronouncement. He sums it up under five major problems for which the Holy Father seeks a solution: (a) Religious, particularly religious priests, tend to be separated from the 'hierarchy'; (b) the inclination to identify the priestly state with the state of perfection begins to exclude religious from an official part in the apostolate; (c) the desire for efficiency and practical achievement condemns the uselessness of the religious; (d) the attraction for activity among the religious themselves; and (e) the problems of adaptation of religious life.

LA VIE SPIRITUELLE (March), devoted to Easter as the Christians' 'Exodus' in the sense of the flight to the Promised Land, contains a useful omnibus review of recent works about the clergy.

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